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THE BIRDS
OF
ARISTOPHANES

THE BIRDS

OF

ARISTOPHANES

ACTED AT ATHENS AT THE GREAT DIONYSIA

B.C. 414

TRANSLATED INTO CORRESPONDING METRES

BY

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INTRODUCTION

THIS Comedy was exhibited at the Great Dionysia in the year B.C. 414. It was placed second of the three competitors ; the prize was awarded to the "Revellers" of Ameipsias, a drama otherwise unknown.

At this time the Sicilian expedition was in the full tide of success, and was apparently on the point of obtaining a triumphant issue. Athens was full of the wildest speculations and the most far-reaching ambitions. These feelings are mirrored in the present Comedy. Two elderly Athenians leave the city and go to sojourn with the Birds, whom they persuade to claim the sovereignty of the world and to build up an enormous wall in the Mid-air, so that no sacrifices offered by men can henceforth reach the sky ; and the Gods are presently starved into submission.

Thus did Aristophanes caricature the high schemes and ambitions which were then in the air ; not as *encouraging* them, for his caricature is fantastic and ludicrous in the extreme ; yet not as *discouraging* them, since even his fantastic adventure is crowned with a brilliant success.

THE BIRDS

CHARACTERS OF THE DRAMA

PEISTHETAERUS.

EUELPIDES.

THE PLOVER-PAGE OF DUNLIN.

THE HOOPOE.

CHORUS OF BIRDS.

PRIEST.

POET.

ORACLE-MONGER.

METON.

COMMISSIONER.

STATUTE-SELLER.

MESSENGER.

GUARD.

IRIS.

HERALD.

SIRE-STRIKER.

CINESIAS.

SYCOPHANT.

PROMETHEUS.

POSEIDON.

HERACLES.

TRIBALLIAN.

SERVANT.

THE BIRDS

A desolate scene. In the background we see a solitary tree, and a sheer rock rising like a wall. In front are two tired old Athenians, each carrying a bird in his hand. The one with a crow is PEISTHETAERUS: the other with a jackdaw, EUELPIDES. The birds have guided them from Athens, but now seem lost; pointing different ways, and sometimes gaping up into the air. In truth, they have reached their goal, but their masters do not know that; and the dialogue is commenced by EUELPIDES, apostrophizing his jackdaw.

EUELPIDES.

STRAIGHT on do you bid me go, where the tree stands?

PEISTHETAERUS.

O hang it all! mine's croaking back again.

EUELPIDES.

Why are we wandering up and down, you rogue?
This endless spin will make an end of us.

PEISTHETAERUS.

To think that I, poor fool, at a crow's bidding,
Should trudge about, an hundred miles and more!

EUELPIDES.

To think that I, poor wretch, at a daw's bidding,
Should wear the very nails from off my feet!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Why, where we are, I've not the least idea.

EUELPIDES.

Could you from hence find out your fatherland? 10

PEISTHETAERUS.

No, that would pose even—Excecestides!

EUELPIDES.

O, here's a nuisance!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Go *you* there, then, friend.

EUELPIDES.

I call Philocrates a regular cheat,
The fool that sells the bird-trays in the market.
He swore these two would lead us straight to Tereus,
The hoopoe, made a bird in that same market.
So then this daw, this son of Tharreleides,
We bought for an obol, and that crow for three.
But what knew they? Nothing, but how to—bite!
Where are you gaping now? Do you want to lead us 20
Against the rocks? There's no road here, I tell you.

PEISTHETAERUS.

No, nor yet here; not even the tiniest path.

EUELPIDES.

Well, but what says your crow about the road?

PEISTHETAERUS.

By Zeus, she croaks quite differently now.

EUELPIDES. [*Shouting.*]

WHAT DOES SHE SAY ABOUT THE ROAD?

PEISTHETAERUS.

She says

She'll gnaw my fingers off: that's all she says.

EUELPIDES.

Now isn't it a shame that when we are here
Ready and willing as two men can be
To go to the ravens, we can't find the way.
For we are sick, spectators, with a sickness 30
Just the reverse of that which Sacas has.
He, no true townsman, would perforce press in;
Whilst we, with rights of tribe and race unchallenged,
Townsmen mid townsmen, no man scaring us,
Spread both our—feet, and flew away from home.
Not that we hate our city, as not being
A prosperous mighty city, free for all
To spend their wealth in, paying fines and fees.
Aye, the cicalas chirp upon the boughs
One month, or two; but our Athenians chirp 40
Over their lawsuits all their whole life long.
That's why we are journeying on this journey now,
Trudging along with basket, pot, and myrtles,
To find some quiet easy-going spot,

Where we may settle down, and dwell in peace.
Tereus, the hoopoe, is our journey's aim,
To learn if he, in any place he has flown to,
Has seen the sort of city that we want.

PEISTHETAERUS.

You there!

EUELPIDES.

What now?

PEISTHETAERUS.

My crow keeps croaking upwards
Ever so long.

EUELPIDES.

And here's my jackdaw gaping 50
Up in the air, as if to show me something.
There must be birds about, I am sure of that.
Let's make a noise and we shall soon find out.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Then harkye; bang your leg against the rock.

EUELPIDES.

And you, your head; and there'll be twice the noise.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Well, take a stone and knock.

EUELPIDES.

Yes, I'll do that.

Boy! Boy!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Eh! What! do you call the hoopoe "Boy"?
You should call "Whoop-ho there," not "Boy" of course.

EUELPIDES.

O, Whoop-ho there! What, must I knock again?
Whoop-ho!

[A door suddenly opens in the rock, and an actor emerges, wearing a head-dress or mask representing the head of a Dunlin (or PLOVER-PAGE) with a long and wide-gaping beak.]

PLOVER-PAGE.

Whoever are these? Who calls my master?

EUELPIDES.

Apollo shield us, what a terrible gape! 61

PLOVER-PAGE.

These be two bird-catchers. O dear, O dear!

EUELPIDES. *[Aside.]*

As nasty-speaking, as unpleasant-looking!

PLOVER-PAGE.

Ye shall both die!

EUELPIDES.

O, we're not men.

PLOVER-PAGE.

What then?

EUELPIDES.

Well, I'm the Panic-struck, a Libyan bird.

PLOVER-PAGE.

Nonsense!

EUELPIDES.

No nonsense: look for yourself and see.

PLOVER-PAGE.

And *he*—what bird is he? come, won't you answer?

PEISTHETAERUS.

I? I'm a pheasant, and a yellow-tailed one.

EUELPIDES.

But O by all the Gods, whatever are you?

PLOVER-PAGE.

A serving-bird.

EUELPIDES.

What, vanquished by some gamecock 70

In fight?

PLOVER-PAGE.

No, but my master, when he first
Became a hoopoe, prayed that I might turn
Into a bird, to be his servant still.

EUELPIDES.

What, does a bird require a serving-bird?

PLOVER-PAGE.

He does, as having been a man, I fancy.
 So when he wants to taste Phaleric sardines,
 I run for the sardines, catching up a dish.
 Does he want soup? then where's the pot and ladle?
 I run for the ladle.

EUELPIDES.

A regular running-page.

Now harkye, Plover-page, run in and call
 Your master out. 80

PLOVER-PAGE.

Great Zeus! he has just been eating
 Myrtles and midges, and is gone to roost.

EUELPIDES.

But still, do wake him.

PLOVER-PAGE.

Well I know he won't
 Like to be waked, still for your sake I'll do it. [*Exit.*]

PEISTHETAERUS.

Confound the bird! he frightened me to death.

EUELPIDES.

O dear! O dear! my heart went pit-a-pat,
 My daw's gone too.

PEISTHETAERUS. [*Severely.*]

Gone! O you coward you,
 You LET him go!

EUELPIDES.

Well, didn't you fall down,
And let your crow go?

PEISTHETAERUS.

No, I didn't. No!

EUELPIDES.

Where is she then?

PEISTHETAERUS.

She flew away herself.

90

EUELPIDES.

You didn't let her go. You're a brave boy!

HOOPOE. [*Within.*]

Throw wide the wood, that I may issue forth!

[*A turn of the eccyclema brings out the HOOPOE,
together with a portion of his dwelling, viz.,
a little copse.*]

EUELPIDES.

O Heracles, why what in the world is this?

What feathering's here? What style of triple-cresting?

HOOPOE.

Who be the folk that seek me?

EUELPIDES.

The Twelve Gods

Would seem to have wrought your ruin.

THE BIRDS

11

HOOPOE.

What, do you jeer me,
Seeing the way I'm feathered? Strangers, I
Was once a man.

EUELPIDES.

It's not at you we're laughing.

HOOPOE.

What is it then?

EUELPIDES.

Your beak looks rather funny.

HOOPOE.

This is the way that Sophocles disfigures
The manly form of Tereus in his Play.

100

EUELPIDES.

What, are you Tereus? Are you bird or peacock?

HOOPOE.

I am a bird.

EUELPIDES.

Then, where are all your feathers?

HOOPOE.

They've fallen off!

EUELPIDES.

What! from disease, or why?

HOOPOE.

No, but in winter-time all birds are wont
To moult their feathers, and then fresh ones grow.
But tell me what *ye* are.

EUELPIDES.

We? mortal men.

HOOPOE.

And of what race?

EUELPIDES.

Whence the brave galleys come.

HOOPOE.

Not dicasts, are ye?

EUELPIDES.

No, the other sort.

We're anti-dicasts.

HOOPOE.

Grows that seedling there?

110

EUELPIDES.

Aye in the country you can find a few,
If you search closely.

HOOPOE.

But what brings you hither?

EUELPIDES.

To talk with you a little.

HOOPOE.

What about ?

EUELPIDES.

You were a man at first, as we are now,
And had your creditors, as we have now,
And loved to shirk your debts, as we do now ;
And then you changed your nature, and became
A bird, and flew round land and sea, and know
All that men feel, and all that birds feel too.
That 's why we are come as suppliants here, to ask 120
If you can tell us of some city, soft
As a thick rug, to lay us down within.

HOOPOE.

Seek ye a mightier than the Cranaan town ?

EUELPIDES.

A mightier, no ; a more commodious, yes.

HOOPOE.

Aristocratic ?

EUELPIDES.

Anything but that !
I loathe the very name of Scellias' son.

HOOPOE.

What sort of city would ye like ?

EUELPIDES.

Why, one
 Where my worst trouble would be such as this;
 A friend at daybreak coming to my door
 And calling out *O by Olympian Zeus,*
Take your bath early: then come round to me,
You and your children, to the wedding banquet
I'm going to give. Now pray don't disappoint me,
Else, keep your distance, when my money's—gone.

130

HOOPOE.

Upon my word, you are quite in love with troubles!
 And *you*?

PEISTHETAERUS.

I love the like.

HOOPOE.

But tell me what.

PEISTHETAERUS.

To have the father of some handsome lad
 Come up and chide me with complaints like these,
Fine things I hear of you, Stilbonides,
You met my son returning from the baths,
And never kissed, or hugged, or fondled him,
You, his paternal friend! You're a nice fellow.

140

HOOPOE.

Poor Poppet, you are in love with ills indeed.
 Well, there's the sort of city that ye want
 By the Red Sea.

EUELPIDES.

Not by the sea! Not where
The Salaminian, with a process-server
On board, may heave in sight some early morn.
But can't you mention some Hellenic town?

HOOPOE.

Why don't ye go and settle down in Elis,
At Lepreus?

EUELPIDES.

Leprous! I was never there, 150
But for Melanthius' sake I loathe the name.

HOOPOE.

Well then, the Opuntians up in Locris, there's
The place to dwell in!

EUELPIDES.

I become Opuntius!
No thank you, no, not for a talent of gold.
But this, this bird-life here, you know it well,
What is this like?

HOOPOE.

A pleasant life enough.
Foremost and first you don't require a purse.

EUELPIDES.

There goes a grand corrupter of our life!

HOOPOE.

Then in the gardens we enjoy the myrtles,
The cress, the poppy, the white sesame.

160

EUELPIDES.

Why, then, ye live a bridegroom's jolly life.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Oh! Oh!

O the grand scheme I see in the birds' reach,
And power to grasp it, if ye'd trust to me!

HOOPOE.

Trust you in what?

PEISTHETAERUS.

What? First don't fly about
In all directions, with your mouths wide open.
That makes you quite despised. With *us*, for instance,
If you should ask the flighty people there,
Who is that fellow? Teleas would reply,
The man's a bird, a flighty feckless bird,
Inconsequential, always on the move.

170

HOOPOE.

Well blamed, i' faith; but what we ought to do,
Tell us.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Live all together: found one State.

HOOPOE.

What sort of State are birds to found, I wonder.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye, say you so? You who have made the most
Idiotic speech, look down.

HOOPOE.

I do.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Look up.

HOOPOE.

I do.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Twirl round your head.

HOOPOE.

Zeus! I shall be

A marvellous gainer, if I twist my neck!

PEISTHETAERUS.

What did you see?

HOOPOE.

I saw the clouds and sky.

PEISTHETAERUS.

And is not that the Station of the Birds?

HOOPOE.

Station?

PEISTHETAERUS.

As one should say, their habitation. 180
 Here while the heavens revolve, and yon great dome
 Is moving round, ye keep your Station still.
 Make this your city, fence it round with walls,
 And from your Station is evolved your State.
 So ye'll be lords of men, as now of locusts,
 And Melian famine shall destroy the Gods.

HOOPOE.

Eh! how?

PEISTHETAERUS.

The Air's betwixt the Earth and Sky.
 And just as we, if we would go to Pytho,
 Must crave a grant of passage from Boeotia,
 Even so, when men slay victims to the Gods, 190
 Unless the Gods pay tribute, ye in turn
 Will grant no passage for the savoury steam
 To rise through Chaos, and a realm not theirs.

HOOPOE.

Hurrah!
 O Earth! ods traps, and nets, and gins, and snares,
 This is the nattiest scheme that e'er I heard of!
 So with your aid I'm quite resolved to found
 The city, if the other birds concur.

PEISTHETAERUS.

And who shall tell them of our plan?

HOOPOE.

Yourself.

O they're not mere barbarians, as they were
Before I came. I've taught them language now. 200

PEISTHETAERUS.

But how to call them hither?

HOOPOE.

That's soon done.

I've but to step within the coppice here,
And wake my sleeping nightingale, and then
We'll call them, both together. Bless the birds,
When once they hear our voices, they'll come running.

PEISTHETAERUS.

You darling bird, now don't delay one instant.
O I beseech you get at once within
Your little copse, and wake the nightingale!

The HOOPOE's Serenade.

HOOPOE.

Awake, my mate!
Shake off thy slumbers, and clear and strong
Let loose the floods of thy glorious song, 210
The sacred dirge of thy mouth divine
For sore-wept Itys, thy child and mine;
Thy tender trillings his name prolong
With the liquid note of thy tawny throat;
Through the leafy curls of the woodbine sweet
The pure sound mounts to the heavenly seat,

And Phoebus, lord of the golden hair,
 As he lists to thy wild plaint echoing there,
 Draws answering strains from his ivoried lyre,
 Till he stirs the dance of the heavenly choir,
 And calls from the blessed lips on high 220
 Of immortal Gods, a divine reply
 To the tones of thy witching melody.

*[The sound of a flute is heard within, imitating the
 nightingale's song.]*

EUELPIDES.

O Zeus and King, the little birdie's voice!
 O how its sweetness honied all the copse!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Hi!

EUELPIDES.

Well?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Keep quiet.

EUELPIDES.

Why?

PEISTHETAERUS.

The Hoopoe here
 Is going to favour us with another song.

The Bird-call by the HOOPOE and Nightingale conjointly; the Nightingale's song being imitated, as before, by the flute.

HOOPOE.

Whoop-ho ! Whoop-ho ! Whoop-hoop-hoop-hoop-hoop-ho !

Hoi ! Hoi ! Hoi ! Come, come, come, come, come !

(The land-birds.)

Come hither any bird with plumage like my own ;
 Come hither ye that batten on the acres newly sown,
 On the acres by the farmer neatly sown ; 231
 And the myriad tribes that feed on the barley and the
 seed,
 The tribes that lightly fly, giving out a gentle cry ;
 And ye who round the clod, in the furrow-riven sod,
 With voices sweet and low, twitter flitter to and fro,
 Singing, *tío, tío, tío, tiotinx* ;
 And ye who in the gardens a pleasant harvest glean,
 Lurking in the branches of the ivy ever green ;
 And ye who top the mountains with gay and airy flight ;
 And ye who in the olive and the arbutus delight ; 241
 Come hither one and all, come flying to our call,
 Triotó, triotó, totobrinx.

(The marsh-birds.)

Ye that snap up the gnats, shrilly voiced,
 Mid the deep water-glens of the fens,
 Or on Marathon's expanse haunt the lea, fair to see,
 Or career o'er the swamps, dewy-moist,
 And the bird with the gay mottled plumes, come away,
 Francolín ! Francolín ! come away !

(*The sea-birds.*)

Ye with the halcyons flitting delightedly 250
Over the surge of the infinite Sea,
Come to the great Revolution awaiting us,
Hither, come hither, come hither to me.
Hither, to listen to wonderful words,
Hither we summon the taper-necked birds.

For hither has come a shrewd old file,
Such a deep old file, such a sharp old file,
His thoughts are new, new deeds he'll do,
Come here, and confer with this shrewd old file.
Come hither! Come hither! Come hither!
Toro-toro-toro-torotinx! 260
Kikkabau, Kikkabau!
Toro-toro-toro-toro-lililinx!

PEISTHETAERUS.

See any bird?

EUELPIDES.

By Apollo no, not I,
Though up I gaze with mouth and eyes wide open.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Methinks the Hoopoe played the lapwing's trick,
Went in the copse, and whooped, and whooped for nothing.

HOOPOE.

Torotinx! Torotinx.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Comrade here's a bird approaching, coming to receive our
visit.

EUELPIDES.

Aye by Zeus, what bird do you call it? Surely not a peacock, is it?

PEISTHETAERUS.

That the Hoopoe here will teach us. Prithee, friend, what bird is he? 270

HOOPOE.

That is not a common object, such as you can always see;
That's a marsh-bird.

EUELPIDES.

Lovely creature! nice and red like flaming flame.

HOOPOE.

So he should be, for Flamingo is the lovely creature's name.

EUELPIDES.

Hi there!

PEISTHETAERUS.

What? The row you're making!

EUELPIDES.

Here's another, full in view.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye by Zeus, another truly, with a foreign aspect too.
Who is he, the summit-ascending, Muse-prophetical,
wondrous bird?

HOOPOE.

He's a Median.

PEISTHETAERUS.

He a Median! Heracles, the thing's absurd.
How on earth without a camel could a Median hither fly?

EUELPIDES.

Here they're coming; here's another, with his crest erected
high.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Goodness gracious, that's a hoopoe; yes, by Zeus, another
one! 280

Are not *you* the only Hoopoe?

HOOPOE.

I'm his grandsire; he's the son
Of the Philocléan hoopoe: as with you a name will pass,
Callias siring Hipponicus, Hipponicus Callias.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O then that is Callias is it? How his feathers moult away!

HOOPOE.

Aye, the simple generous creature, he's to parasites a prey.
And the females flock around him, plucking out his feathers
too.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O Poseidon, here's another; here's a bird of brilliant hue!
What's the name of this, I wonder.

HOOPOE.

That's a Glutton styled by us.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Is there then another Glutton than our own Cleonymus?

EUELPIDES.

Our Cleonymus, I fancy, would have thrown his crest
away. 290

PEISTHETAERUS.

But what means the crest-equipment of so many birds, I
pray?
Are they going to race in armour?

HOOPOE.

No, my worthy friend, they make
Make their dwellings, like the Carians, on the crests for
safety's sake.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O Poseidon, what the mischief! see the birds are every-
where
Fluttering onward.

EUELPIDES.

King Apollo, what a cloud! O! O! look there,
Now we cannot see the entrance for the numbers crowd-
ing in.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Here you see a partridge coming, there by Zeus a francolin,
Here a widgeon onward hurries, there's a halcyon, sure as
fate.

EUELPIDES.

Who's behind her?

PEISTHETAERUS.

That's a clipper; he's the lady halcyon's mate.

EUELPIDES.

Can a clipper be a bird then?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Sporgilus is surely so. 300

Here's an owl.

EUELPIDES.

And who to Athens brought an owl, I'd like to know.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Jay and turtle, lark and sedgebird, thyme-finch, ring-dove
first, and then
Rock-dove, stock-dove, cuckoo, falcon, fiery-crest, and
willow wren,
Lammergeyer, porphyryon, kestrel, waxwing, nuthatch,
water-hen.

EUELPIDES. [*Singing.*]

Ohó for the birds, Ohó! Ohó!

Ohó for the blackbirds, ho!

How they twitter, how they go, shrieking and screaming
to and fro.

Goodness! are they going to charge us? They are gazing
here, and see

All their beaks they open widely.

PEISTHETAERUS.

That is what occurs to me.

CHORUS.

Wh-wh-wh-wh-wh-wh-wh-wh-where may he be that was
calling for me? In what locality pastureth he? 310

HOOPOE.

I am ready, waiting here; never from my friends I stir.

CHORUS.

Te-te-te-te-te-te-te-teach me, I pray, in an amicable
way, what is the news you have gotten to say.

HOOPOE.

News amazing! News auspicious! News delightful, safe,
and free!

Birds! Two men of subtlest genius hither have arrived to
me.

CHORUS.

Who! What! When! say that again.

HOOPOE.

Here, I say, have come two elders, travelling to the birds
from man, 320

And the stem they are bringing with them of a most
stupendous plan.

CHORUS.

You who have made the greatest error since my callow
life began,
What do you say?

HOOPOE.

Now don't be nervous.

CHORUS.

What is the thing you have done to me?

HOOPOE.

I've received two men, enamoured of your sweet society.

CHORUS.

You have really dared to do it?

HOOPOE.

Gladly I the deed avow.

CHORUS.

And the pair are now amongst us?

HOOPOE.

Aye, if I'm amongst you now

CHORUS.

O! O! Out upon you!

We are cheated and betrayed, we have suffered shame and
wrong!

For our comrade and our friend who has fed with us so
long,

He has broken every oath, and his holy plighted troth,
And the old social customs of our clan.

He has led us unawares into wiles, and into snares,
 He has given us a prey, all helpless and forlorn,
 To those who were our foes from the time that they
 were born,
 To vile and abominable Man !

But for him, our bird-companion, comes a reckoning by
 and by ;
 As for these two old deceivers, they shall suffer instantly,
 Bit by bit we'll tear and rend them.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Here's a very horrid mess.

EUELPIDES.

Wretched man, 'twas you that caused it, you and all your
 cleverness !
 Why you brought me I can't see.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Just that you might follow me. 340

EUELPIDES.

Just that I might die of weeping.

PEISTHETAERUS.

What a foolish thing to say !
 Weeping will be quite beyond you, when your eyes are
 pecked away.

CHORUS.

On! On! In upon them!
 Make a very bloody onset, spread your wings about your
 foes,

Assail them and attack them, and surround them and
enclose.

Both, both of them shall die, and their bodies shall supply
A rare dainty pasture for my beak.

For never shall be found any distant spot of ground,
Or shadowy mountain covert, or foamy Ocean wave,
Or cloud in Ether floating, which these reprobates shall
save 350

From the doom that upon them I will wreak.

On then, on, my flying squadrons, now is the time to tear
and bite,

Tarry ye not an instant^a longer. Brigadier, advance our
right.

EUELPIDES.

Here it comes! I'm off, confound them.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Fool, why can't you remain with me?

EUELPIDES.

What! that these may tear and rend me?

PEISTHETAERUS.

How can you hope from birds to flee?

EUELPIDES.

Truly, I haven't the least idea.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Then it is I the affair must guide.
Seize we a pot and, the charge awaiting, here we will
combat side by side.

EUELPIDES.

Pot! and how can a pot avail us?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Never an owl will then come near.

EUELPIDES.

What of these birds of prey with talons?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Snatch up a spit, like a hoplite's spear,
Planting it firmly there before you.

EUELPIDES.

What shall I do about my eyes? 360

PEISTHETAERUS.

Take a platter, or take a saucer, holding it over them
buckler-wise.

EUELPIDES.

What a skilful neat contrivance! O you clever fellow you,
In your military science Nicias you far outdo!

CHORUS.

Eleleleu! advance! no loitering; level your beaks and
charge away.
Shatter the pot at once to pieces; worry, and scratch, and
tear, and flay!

HOOPOE.

O, whatever is your purpose? is your villainy so great,

You would slay two worthy persons, kinsmen, clansmen,
of my mate?

Men who never sought to harm you, would you tear and
lacerate?

CHORUS.

Why, I wonder, should we spare them, more than raven-
ing beasts of prey?

Shall we ever find, for vengeance, enemies more rank than
they? 370

HOOPOE.

Enemies, I grant, by nature, very friends in heart and
will;

Here they come with kindly purpose, useful lessons to
instil.

CHORUS.

What, they come with words of friendship? What, you
really then suppose

They will teach us useful lessons, they our fathers' fathers'
foes?

HOOPOE.

Yet to clever folk a foeman very useful hints may show;
Thus, that foresight brings us safety, from a friend we
ne'er should know,

But the truth is forced upon us, very quickly, by a foe.

Hence it is that all the Cities, taught by foe, and not by
friend,

Learn to build them ships of battle, and their lofty walls
extend;

So by this, a foeman's, teaching children, home, and
wealth defend. 380

CHORUS.

Well, I really think 'tis better that their errand we should
know ;

I admit that something useful may be taught us by a foe.

PEISTHETAERUS. [*To* EUELPIDES.]

Now their anger grows more slack ; now we had better
just draw back.

HOOPOE. [*To* CHORUS.]

This is right and friendly conduct, such as I deserve from
you.

CHORUS.

Well, I am sure that we have never gone against you
hitherto.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Now they are growing a deal more peaceful, now is the
time the pot to ground,

Now we may lower the platters twain.

Nay, but the spit we had best retain,

Walking within the encampment's bound,

Letting our watchful glances skim 390

Over the edge of the pot's top rim ;

Never a thought of flight must strike us.

EUELPIDES.

Well, but tell me, suppose we die,

Where in the world will our bodies lie ?

PEISTHETAERUS.

They shall be buried in Cerameicus,

That will be done at the public cost,

For we will say that our lives we lost
 Gallantly fighting the public foe,
 (Yea, we will tell the commanders so.)
 Gallantly fighting at Orneae.

CHORUS.

Fall back, fall back to your ranks once more, 400
 And stand at ease as ye stood before,
 And lay your wrath on the ground, in line
 With your angry mood, as a warrior should ;
 We'll ask the while who the men may be,
 And whence they come, and with what design.
 Hey, Hoopoe, hey ! to you I speak.

HOOPOE.

What is it that to learn you seek ?

CHORUS.

Whence are these visitors and who ?

HOOPOE.

From clever Hellas strangers two.

CHORUS.

What's their aim ?	Canst thou tell	410
Why they came	Here to dwell ?	

HOOPOE.

Love of you,	Love of your
Life and ways	Was the lure.
Here they fain	Would remain
Comrades true	All their days.

CHORUS.

Hey, hey, what do you say?
What is the tale they tell?

HOOPOE.

In brief,
'Tis something more than past belief.

CHORUS.

But wherefore is he come? What is it
He seeks to compass by his visit?
Think you he's got some cunning plan
Whereby, allied with us, he can
Assist a friend, or harm a foe?
What brings him here, I'd like to know.

420

HOOPOE.

Too great, too great, for thought or words,
The bliss he promises the birds.
All things are yours, he says, whate'er
Exists in space, both here and there,
And to and fro, and everywhere.

CHORUS.

Mad a little, eh?

HOOPOE.

More sane than words can say.

CHORUS.

Wide awake?

HOOPOE.

Wide as day.

The subtlest cunningest fox,
All scheme, invention, craft; wit, wisdom, paradox. 430

CHORUS.

His speech, his speech, bid him begin it.
The things you show excite me so,
I'm fit to fly this very minute.

HOOPOE.

Now you and you, take back this panoply,
And hang it up, God bless it, out of sight
Within the kitchen there, beside the Jack.
But you [*to PEISTHETAERUS*] the things we summoned
them to hear
Expound, declare.

PEISTHETAERUS.

By Apollo no, not I,
Unless they pledge me such a treaty-pledge
As that small jackanapes who makes the swords 440
Pledged with his wife, to wit that they'll not bite me
Nor pull me about, nor scratch my—

CHORUS.

Fie, for shame!

Not *this*? no, no!

PEISTHETAERUS.

My eyes, I was going to say.

CHORUS.

I pledge it.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Swear!

CHORUS.

I swear on these conditions;

So may I win by every judge's vote,
And the whole Theatre's.

PEISTHETAERUS.

AND SO YOU SHALL.

CHORUS.

But if I'm false, then by one vote alone.

HOOPOE.

O yes! O yes! Hoplites, take up your arms
And march back homewards; there await the orders
We're going to publish on the notice-boards. 450

CHORUS.

Full of wiles, full of guiles, at all times, in all ways,
Are the children of Men; still we'll hear what he says.

Thou hast haply detected
Something good for the Birds which we never suspected;
Some power of achievement, too high
For my own shallow wit by itself to descry.

But if aught you espy,
Tell it out; for whate'er of advantage shall fall
To ourselves by your aid, shall be common to all.

So expound us the plan you have brought us, my man, not
doubting, it seems, of success. 460

And don't be afraid, for the treaty we made we won't be
the first to transgress.

PEISTHETAERUS.

I am hot to begin, and my spirit within is fermenting the
tale to declare.

And my dough I will knead, for there's nought to impede.

Boy, bring me a wreath for my hair,
And a wash for my hands.

EUELPIDES.

Why, what mean these commands? Is a dinner in near contemplation?

PEISTHETAERUS.

No dinner, I ween; 'tis a SPEECH that I mean, a stalwart
and brawny oration,

Their spirit to batter, and shiver and shatter. [*To the Birds.*]
So sorely I grieve for your lot

Who once in the prime and beginning of time were
Sovereigns—

CHORUS.

We Sovereigns! of what?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Of all that you see; of him and of me; of Zeus up above
on his throne;

A lineage older and nobler by far than the Titans and
Cronos ye own,

And than Earth.

CHORUS.

And than Earth!

PEISTHETAERUS.

By Apollo 'tis true.

CHORUS.

And I never had heard it before ! 470

PEISTHETAERUS.

Because you've a blind uninquisitive mind, unaccustomed
on Aesop to pore.

The lark had her birth, so he says, before Earth ; then her
father fell sick and he died.

She laid out his body with dutiful care, but a grave she
could nowhere provide ;

For the Earth was not yet in existence ; at last, by urgent
necessity led,

When the fifth day arrived, the poor creature contrived to
bury her sire in her head.

EUELPIDES.

So the sire of the lark, give me leave to remark, on the
crest of an headland lies dead.

PEISTHETAERUS.

If therefore, by birth, ye are older than Earth, if before
all the Gods ye existed,

By the right of the firstborn the sceptre is yours ; your
claim cannot well be resisted.

EUELPIDES.

I advise you to nourish and strengthen your beak, and to
keep it in trim for a stroke.

Zeus won't in a hurry the sceptre restore to the wood-
pecker tapping the oak. 480

PEISTHETAERUS.

In times prehistoric 'tis easily proved, by evidence weighty
and ample,
That Birds, and not Gods, were the Rulers of men, and
the Lords of the world ; for example,
Time was that the Persians were ruled by the Cock, a
King autocratic, alone ;
The sceptre he wielded or ever the names "Megabazus,"
"Darius" were known ;
And the "Persian" he still by the people is called from
the Empire that once was his own.

EUELPIDES.

And thus, to this hour, the symbol of power on his head
you can always detect :
Like the Sovereign of Persia, alone of the Birds, he stalks
with tiara erect.

PEISTHETAERUS.

So mighty and great was his former estate, so ample he
waxed and so strong,
That still the tradition is potent, and still, when he sings
in the morning his song,
At once from their sleep all mortals upleap, the cobblers,
the tanners, the bakers, 490
The potters, the bathmen, the smiths, and the shield-and-
the-musical-instrument-makers ;
And some will at eve take their sandals and leave.

EUELPIDES.

I can answer for that, to my cost.
'Twas all through his crowing at eve that my cloke, the
softest of Phrygians, I lost,

I was asked to the Tenth-day feast of a child ; and I drank
ere the feast was begun ;
Then I take my repose ; and anon the cock crows ; so
thinking it daybreak I run
To return from the City to Halimus town ; but scarce I
emerge from the wall,
When I get such a whack with a stick on my back from a
rascally thief, that I fall,
And he skims off my cloke from my shoulders or e'er for
assistance I'm able to bawl.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Then a Kite was the Sovereign of Hellas of old, and ruled
with an absolute sway.

CHORUS.

The Sovereign of Hellas !

PEISTHETAERUS.

And, taught by his rule, we wallow on earth to this day
When a Kite we espy. [500

EUELPIDES.

By Bacchus, 'twas I saw a Kite in the air ; so I wallow
Then raising my eyne from by posture supine, I give such
a gulp that I swallow
O what but an obol I've got in my mouth, and am forced
to return empty-handed.

PEISTHETAERUS.

And the whole of Phoenice and Egypt was erst by a
masterful Cuckoo commanded.
When his loud cuckoo-cry was resounding on high, at
once the Phoenicians would leap

All hands to the plain, rich-waving with grain, their
wheat and their barley to reap.

EUELPIDES.

So that 's why we cry to the circumcised *Hi ! Cuckoo ! To
the plain ! Cuckoo !*

PEISTHETAERUS.

And whene'er in the cities of Hellas a chief to honour and
dignity grew,
Menelaus or King Agamemnon perchance, your rule was
so firm and decided
That a bird on his sceptre would perch, to partake of the
gifts for his Lordship provided. 510

EUELPIDES.

Now of that I declare I was never aware ; and I oft have
been filled with amaze,
When Priam so noble and stately appeared, with a bird,
in the Tragedy-plays.
But the bird was no doubt for the gifts looking out, to
Lysicrates brought on the sly.

PEISTHETAERUS.

But the strongest and clearest of proofs is that Zeus who
at present is Lord of the sky
Stands wearing, as Royalty's emblem and badge, an Eagle
erect on his head,
Our Lady an owl, and Apollo forsooth, as a lackey, a
falcon instead.

EUELPIDES.

By Demeter, 'tis true ; that is just what they do ; but tell
me the reason, I pray.

PEISTHETAERUS.

That the bird may be ready and able, whene'er the
sacrificed inwards we lay,

As custom demands, in the deity's hands, to seize before
Zeus on the fare.

And none by the Gods, but all by the Birds, were accus-
tomed aforetime to swear: 520

And Lampon will vow by the Goose even now, whenever
he's going to cheat you:

So holy and mighty they deemed you of old, with so deep
a respect did they treat you!

Now they treat you as knaves, and as fools, and
as slaves;

Yea they pelt you as though ye were mad.

No safety for you can the Temples ensure,

For the bird-catcher sets his nooses and nets,

And his traps, and his toils, and his bait, and his
lure,

And his lime-covered rods in the shrine of the
Gods!

Then he takes you, and sets you for sale in the
lump;

And the customers, buying, come poking and
prying 530

And twitching and trying,

To feel if your bodies are tender and plump.

And if they decide on your flesh to sup

They don't just roast you and serve you up.

But over your bodies, as prone ye lie,

They grate their cheese and their silphium too,

And oil and vinegar add,

Then a gravy, luscious and rich, they brew,

And pour it in soft warm streams o'er you,
As though ye were carrion noisome and dry.

CHORUS.

O man, 'tis indeed a most pitiful tale
Thou hast brought to our ears; and I can but
bewail 540

Our fathers' demerit,
Who born such an Empire as this to inherit
Have lost it, have lost it, for me!
But now thou art come, by good Fortune's
decree,
Our Saviour to be,
And under thy charge, whatsoever befall,
I will place my own self, and my nestlings,
and all.

Now therefore do you tell us what we must do; since life
is not worth our retaining,
Unless we be Lords of the world as before, our ancient
dominion regaining.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Then first I propose that the Air ye enclose, and the space
'twixt the Earth and the sky, 550
Encircling it all with a brick-built wall, like Babylon's,
solid and high;
And there you must place the abode of your race, and make
them one State, and one nation.

EUELPIDES.

O Porphyryon! O Cebriones! how stupendous the fortifi-
cation!

PEISTHETAERUS.

When the wall is complete, send a messenger fleet, the
 empire from Zeus to reclaim.

And if he deny, or be slow to comply, nor retreat in
 confusion and shame,

Proclaim ye against him a Holy War, and announce that
 no longer below,

On their lawless amours through these regions of yours,
 will the Gods be permitted to go.

No more through the air, (to their Alopes fair, their
 Alcmenas, their Semeles wending)

May they post in hot love, as of old, from above, for if
 ever you catch them descending,

You will clap on their dissolute persons a seal, their evil
 designs to prevent ! 560

And then let another ambassador-bird to men with this
 message be sent,

That the Birds being Sovereigns, to them must be paid all
 honour and worship divine,

And the Gods for the future to them be postponed. Now
 therefore assort and combine

Each God with a bird, whichever will best with his nature
 and attributes suit ;

If to Queen Aphrodite a victim ye slay, first sacrifice grain
 to the coot ;

If a sheep to Poseidon ye slay, to the duck let wheat as a
 victim be brought ;

And a big honey-cake for the cormorant make, if ye offer
 to Heracles aught.

Bring a ram for King Zeus ! But ye first must produce
 for our Kinglet, the gold-crowned wren,

A masculine midge, full formed and entire, to be sacrificed
 duly by men.

EUELPIDES.

I am tickled and pleased with the sacrificed midge. Now
thunder away, great Zan! 570

CHORUS.

But men, will they take us for Gods, and not daws,—do
ye really believe that they can—
If they see us on wings flying idly about?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Don't say such ridiculous things!
Why Hermes, and lots of the deities too, go flying about
upon wings.
There is Victory, bold on her pinions of gold; and then,
by the Powers, there is Love;
And Iris, says Homer, shoots straight through the skies,
with the ease of a terrified dove.

EUELPIDES.

And the thunderbolt flies upon wings, I surmise: what if
Zeus upon us let it fall?

PEISTHETAERUS.

But suppose that mankind, being stupid and blind, should
account you as nothing at all,
And still in the Gods of Olympus believe—why then, like
a cloud, shall a swarm
Of sparrows and rooks settle down on their stooks, and
devour all the seed in the farm.
Demeter may fill them with grain, if she will, when
hungry and pinched they entreat her. 580

EUELPIDES.

O no, for by Zeus, she will make some excuse; that is
always the way with Demeter.

PEISTHETAERUS.

And truly the ravens shall pluck out the eyes of the oxen
that work in the plough,
Of the flocks and the herds, as a proof that the Birds are
the Masters and Potentates now.
Apollo the leech, if his aid they beseech, may cure them;
but then they must pay!

EUELPIDES.

Nay but hold, nay but hold, nor begin till I've sold my
two little oxen I pray.

PEISTHETAERUS.

But when once to esteem you as God, and as Life, and as
Cronos and Earth they've begun,
And as noble Poseidon, what joys shall be theirs!

CHORUS.

Will you kindly inform me of one?

PEISTHETAERUS.

The delicate tendrils and bloom of the vine no more shall
the locusts molest,
One gallant brigade of the kestrels and owls shall rid them
at once of the pest.
No more shall the mite and the gall-making blight the
fruit of the fig-tree devour; 590
Of thrushes one troop on their armies shall swoop, and
clear them all off in an hour.

CHORUS.

But how shall we furnish the people with wealth? It is
wealth that they mostly desire.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Choice blessings and rare ye shall give them whene'er they
come to your shrine to inquire.
To the seer ye shall tell when 'tis lucky and well for a
merchant to sail o'er the seas,
So that never a skipper again shall be lost.

CHORUS.

What, "never"? Explain if you please.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Are they seeking to know when a voyage to go? The
Birds shall give answers to guide them.
Now stick to the land, there's a tempest at hand! Now sail!
and good luck shall betide them.

EUELPIDES.

A galley for me; I am off to the sea! No longer with you
will I stay.

PEISTHETAERUS.

The treasures of silver long since in the earth by their
forefathers hidden away
To men ye shall show, for the secret ye know. How often
a man will declare, 600
*There is no one who knows where my treasures repose, if it be
not a bird of the air.*

EUELPIDES.

My galley may go; I will buy me a hoe, and dig for the
crock and the casket.

CHORUS.

But Health, I opine, is a blessing divine; can we give it
to men if they ask it?

PEISTHETAERUS.

If they've plenty of wealth, they'll have plenty of health;
ye may rest quite assured that they will.
Did you ever hear tell of a man that was well, when faring
remarkably ill?

CHORUS.

Long life 'tis Olympus alone can bestow; so can men live
as long as before?
Must they die in their youth?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Die? No! why in truth
their lives by three hundred or more
New years ye will lengthen.

CHORUS.

Why, whence will they come?

PEISTHETAERUS.

From your own inexhaustible store.
What! dost thou not know that the noisy-tongued crow
lives five generations of men?

EUELPIDES.

O fie! it is plain they are fitter to reign than the Gods;
let us have them again.

610

PEISTHETAERUS.

Ay, fitter by far !

No need for their sakes to erect and adorn

Great temples of marble with portals of gold.

Enough for the birds on the brake and the thorn

And the evergreen oak their receptions to hold.

Or if any are noble, and courtly, and fine,

The tree of the olive will serve for their shrine.

No need, when a blessing we seek, to repair

To Delphi or Ammon, and sacrifice there ;

We will under an olive or arbutus stand 620

With a present of barley and wheat,

And piously lifting our heart and our hand

The birds for a boon we'll entreat,

And the boon shall be ours, and our suit we shall gain

At the cost of a few little handfuls of grain.

CHORUS.

I thought thee at first of my foemen the worst ; and lo,

I have found thee the wisest

And best of my friends, and our nation intends to do
whatsoe'er thou advisest.

A spirit so lofty and rare

Thy words have within me excited, 630

That I lift up my soul, and I swear

That if Thou wilt with Me be united

In bonds that are holy and true

And honest and just and sincere,

If our hearts are attuned to one song,

We will march on the Gods without fear ;

The sceptre—MY sceptre, MY due,—

They shall not be handling it long !

So all that by muscle and strength can be done, we Birds
will assuredly do ;
But whatever by prudence and skill must be won, we
leave altogether to you.

HOOPOE.

Aye, and, by Zeus, the time is over now
For drowsy nods and Nicias-hesitations. 640
We must be up and doing ! And do you,
Or e'er we start, visit this nest of mine,
My bits of things, my little sticks and straws ;
And tell me what your names are.

PEISTHETAERUS.

That 's soon done.

My name is Peisthetaerus.

HOOPOE.

And your friend's ?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Euelpides of Crio.

HOOPOE.

Well ye are both
Heartily welcome.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Thank you.

HOOPOE.

Come ye in.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye, come we in ; you, please, precede us.

HOOPOE.

Come.

PEISTHETAERUS.

But—dear! what was it? step you back a moment.
O yes,—but tell us, how can he and I 649
Consort with you, we wingless and you winged?

HOOPOE.

Why, very well.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Nay but in Aesop's fables
There's something, mind you, told about the fox
How ill it fared, consorting with an eagle.

HOOPOE.

O never fear; for there's a little root
Which when ye have eaten, ye will both be
winged.

PEISTHETAERUS.

That being so, we'll enter. Xanthias there,
And Manodorus, bring along the traps.

CHORUS.

O stay, and O stay!

HOOPOE.

Why, what ails you to-day?

CHORUS.

Take the gentlemen
in, and regale them, we say;

But O for the nightingale peerless in song, who chants
in the choir of the Muses her lay ;
Our sweetest and best, fetch her out of the nest, and leave
her awhile with the Chorus to play. 660

PEISTHETAERUS.

O do, by Zeus, grant them this one request ;
Fetch out the little warbler from the reeds.

EUELPIDES.

Yes, fetch her out by all the Gods, that so
We too may gaze upon the nightingale.

HOOPOE.

Well, if you wish it, so we'll have it. Procne,
Come hither, dear, and let the strangers see you.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Zeus, what a darling lovely little bird !
How fair, and tender !

EUELPIDES.

O the little love,
Wouldn't I like to be her mate this instant !

PEISTHETAERUS.

And O the gold she is wearing, like a girl. 670

EUELPIDES.

Upon my word, I've half a mind to kiss her !

PEISTHETAERUS.

Kiss her, you fool ! Her beak 's a pair of spits.

EUELPIDES.

But I would treat her like an egg, and strip
The egg-shell from her poll, and kiss her so.

HOOPOE.

Come, go we in.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Lead on, and luck go with us.

[*The HOOPOE and his two guests enter the Hoopoe's
house, and the rock is closed.*]

CHORUS.

O darling! O tawny-throat!

Love, whom I love the best,

Dearer than all the rest,

Playmate and partner in

All my soft lays,

Thou art come! Thou art come! 680

Thou hast dawned on my gaze,

I have heard thy sweet note,

Nightingale! Nightingale!

Thou from thy flute Softly-sounding canst bring

Music to suit With our songs of the Spring:

Begin then I pray

Our own anapaestic address to essay.

Ye men who are dimly existing below, who perish and
fade as the leaf,

Pale, weebegone, shadowlike, spiritless folk, life feeble and
wingless and brief,

Frail castings in clay, who are gone in a day, like a dream
full of sorrow and sighing,

Come listen with care to the Birds of the air, the ageless,
the deathless, who flying
In the joy and the freshness of Ether, are wont to muse
upon wisdom undying.

We will tell you of things transcendental ; of Springs and
of Rivers the mighty upheaval ; 690

The nature of Birds ; and the birth of the Gods : and of
Chaos and Darkness primeval.

When this ye shall know, let old Prodicus go, and be
hanged without hope of reprieval.

THERE WAS Chaos at first, and Darkness, and Night, and
Tartarus vasty and dismal ;

But the Earth was not there, nor the Sky, nor the Air,
till at length in the bosom abysmal

Of Darkness an egg, from the whirlwind conceived, was
laid by the sable-plumed Night.

And out of that egg, as the Seasons revolved, sprang Love,
the entrancing, the bright,

Love brilliant and bold with his pinions of gold, like a
whirlwind, refulgent and sparkling !

Love hatched us, commingling in Tartarus wide, with
Chaos, the murky, the darkling,

And brought us above, as the firstlings of love, and first
to the light we ascended.

There was never a race of Immortals at all till Love had
the universe blended ; 700

Then all things commingling together in love, there arose
the fair Earth, and the Sky,

And the limitless Sea ; and the race of the Gods, the
Blessed, who never shall die.

So we than the Blessed are older by far ; and abundance
of proof is existing

That we are the children of Love, for we fly, unfortunate
lovers assisting.

And many a man who has found, to his cost, that his
powers of persuasion have failed,

And his loves have abjured him for ever, again by the
power of the Birds has prevailed;

For the gift of a quail, or a Porphyry rail, or a Persian, or
goose, will regain them.

And the chiefest of blessings ye mortals enjoy, by the help
of the Birds ye obtain them.

'Tis from us that the signs of the Seasons in turn, Spring,
Winter, and Autumn are known.

When to Libya the crane flies clanging again, it is time
for the seed to be sown, 710

And the skipper may hang up his rudder awhile, and sleep
after all his exertions,

And Orestes may weave him a wrap to be warm when
he's out on his thievish excursions.

Then cometh the kite, with its hovering flight, of the
advent of Spring to tell,

And the Spring sheep-shearing begins; and next, your
woollen attire you sell,

And buy you a lighter and daintier garb, when you note
the return of the swallow.

Thus your Ammon, Dodona, and Delphi are we; we are
also your Phoebus Apollo.

For whatever you do, if a trade you pursue, or goods in
the market are buying,

Or the wedding attend of a neighbour and friend, first you
look to the Birds and their flying.

And whene'er you of omen or augury speak, *'tis a bird*
you are always repeating;

A Rumour's a bird, and a sneeze is a bird, and so is a word
or a meeting, 720

A servant's a bird, and an ass is a bird. It must therefore
assuredly follow

That the birds are to you (I protest it is true) your
prophetic divining Apollo.

Then take us for Gods, as is proper and fit,
And Muses Prophetic ye'll have at your call
Spring, winter, and summer, and autumn and all.
And we won't run away from your worship, and sit
Up above in the clouds, very stately and grand,
Like Zeus in his tempers: but always at hand
Health and wealth we'll bestow, as the formula runs,
ON YOURSELVES, AND YOUR SONS, AND THE SONS OF YOUR
SONS; 730

And happiness, plenty, and peace shall belong
To you all; and the revel, the dance, and the song,
And laughter, and youth, and the milk of the birds
We'll supply, and we'll never forsake you.
Ye'll be quite overburdened with pleasures and joys,
So happy and blest we will make you. '

O woodland Muse,
tlo, tio, tlo, tiotinx,
Of varied plume, with whose dear aid
On the mountain top, and the sylvan glade, 740
tlo, tio, tlo, tiotinx,
I, sitting up aloft on a leafy ash, full oft,
tlo, tio, tlo, tiotinx,
Pour forth a warbling note from my little tawny
throat,

Pour festive choral dances to the mountain mother's
 praise,
 And to Pan the holy music of his own immortal lays;
totótotótótótótótinix,
 Whence Phrynichus of old,
 Sipping the fruit of our ambrosial lay,
 Bore, like a bee, the honied store away, 750
 His own sweet songs to mould.
tio, tío, tio, tío, tiotinx.

Is there any one amongst you, O spectators, who would
 lead
 With the birds a life of pleasure, let him come to us with
 speed.
 All that here is reckoned shameful, all that here the laws
 condemn,
 With the birds is right and proper, you may do it all with
 them.
 Is it here by law forbidden for a son to beat his sire?
 That a chick should strike his father, strutting up with
 youthful ire,
 Crowing *Raise your spur and fight me*, that is what the
 birds admire.
 Come you runaway deserter, spotted o'er with marks of
 shame, 760
 Spotted Francolin we'll call you, that, with us, shall be
 your name.
 You who style yourself a tribesman, Phrygian pure as
 Spintharus,
 Come and be a Phrygian linnet, of Philemon's breed,
 with us.
 Come along, you slave and Carian, Excecestides to wit,

Breed with us your Cuckoo-rearers, they'll be guildsmen
apt and fit.

Son of Peisias, who to outlaws would the city gates
betray,

Come to us, and be a partridge (*cockerel like the cock*, they
say),

We esteem it no dishonour knavish partridge-tricks to
play.

Even thus the Swans,

tío, tío, tío, tiotinx,

770

Their clamorous cry were erst up-raising,

With clatter of wings Apollo praising,

tío, tío, tío, tiotinx,

As they sat in serried ranks on the river Hebrus'
banks.

tío, tío, tío, tiotinx,

Right upward went the cry through the cloud and through
the sky.

Quailed the wild-beast in his covert, and the bird within
her nest,

And the still and windless Ether lulled the ocean-waves
to rest.

totótótótótótótótinx.

Loudly Olympus rang !

780

Amazement seized the kings ; and every Grace

And every Muse within that heavenly place

Took up the strain, and sang.

tío, tío, tío, tío, tiotinx.

Truly to be clad in feathers is the very best of things.

Only fancy, dear spectators, had you each a brace of
wings,

Never need you, tired and hungry, at a Tragic Chorus
stay,

You would lightly, when it bored you, spread your wings
and fly away,

Back returning, after luncheon, to enjoy our Comic Play.

Never need a Patrocleides, sitting here, his garment stain;

When the dire occasion seized him, he would off with
might and main 791

Flying home, then flying hither, lightened and relieved,
again.

If a gallant should the husband on the Council-bench be-
hold

Of a gay and charming lady, one whom he had loved of
old,

Off at once he'd fly to greet her, have a little converse
sweet,

Then be back, or e'er ye missed him, calm and smiling in
his seat.

Is not then a suit of feathers quite the very best of things?

Why, Diitrephes was chosen, though he had but wicker
wings,

First a Captain, then a Colonel, till from nothing he of
late

Has become a tawny cock-horse, yea a pillar of the State! 800

[PEISTHETAERUS and EUELPIDES *re-enter*. They
have eaten "the little root" and are now
furnished with wings.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Well, here we are. By Zeus, I never saw
In all my life a sight more laughable.

EUELPIDES.

What are you laughing at?

PEISTHETAERUS.

At your flight-feathers.
I'll tell you what you're like, your wings and you,
Just like a gander, sketched by some cheap-Jack.

EUELPIDES.

And you, a blackbird, with a bowl-cropped noddle.

PEISTHETAERUS.

These shafts of ridicule are winged by nought
But our own plumes, as Aeschylus would say.

CHORUS.

What's the next step?

PEISTHETAERUS.

First we must give the city
Some grand big name: and then we'll sacrifice 810
To the high Gods.

EUELPIDES.

That's my opinion also.

CHORUS.

Then let's consider what the name shall be.

PEISTHETAERUS.

What think you of that grand Laconian name,
Sparta?

EUELPIDES.

What! Sparta for my city? No.
I wouldn't use esparto for my pallet,
Not if I'd cords; by Heracles, not I.

PEISTHETAERUS.

How shall we name it then?

CHORUS.

Invent some fine
Magniloquent name, drawn from these upper spaces
And clouds.

PEISTHETAERUS.

What think you of Cloudcuckoobury?

CHORUS.

Good! Good!
You have found a good big name, and no mistake. 820

EUELPIDES.

Is this the great Cloudcuckoobury town
Where all the wealth of Aeschines lies hid,
And all Theagenes's?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Best of all,
This is the plain of Phlegra, where the Gods
Outshot the giants at the game of Brag.

EUELPIDES.

A glistening sort of a city! Who shall be
Its guardian God? For whom shall we weave the Peplus?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Why not retain Athene, City-keeper ?

EUELPIDES.

And how can that be a well-ordered State,
Where she, a woman born, a Goddess, stands 830
Full-armed, and Cleisthenes assumes a spindle ?

PEISTHETAERUS.

And who shall hold the citadel's Storkade ?

CHORUS.

A bird of ours, one of the Persian breed,
Everywhere noted as the War-god's own
Armipotent cockerel.

EUELPIDES.

O, Prince Cockerel ? Yes,
He's just the God to perch upon the rocks.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Now, comrade, get you up into the air,
And lend a hand to those that build the wall.
Bring up the rubble ; strip, and mix the mortar ;
Run up the ladder with the hod ; fall off ; 840
Station the sentinels ; conceal the fire ;
Round with the alarum bell ; go fast asleep ;
And send two heralds, one to heaven above,
And one to earth below ; and let them come
From thence, for me.

EUELPIDES.

And you, remaining here,
Be hanged—for me !

PEISTHETAERUS.

Go where I send you, comrade,
Without your help there nothing will be done.

[Exit EUELPIDES.]

But I, to sacrifice to these new Gods,
Must call the priest to regulate the show.
Boy! Boy! take up the basket and the laver.

850

CHORUS.

I'M WITH you, you'll find me quite willing :
I highly approve of your killing
A lambkin, to win us the favour divine,
Mid holy processions, stately and fine.
Up high, up high, let the Pythian cry,
The Pythian cry to the God be sent ;
Let Chaeris play the accompaniment.

*[Talk of Chaeris and he is sure to appear. An
ætor enters with a raven's head and wings,
but otherwise made up to resemble that unwell-
come piper. He is playing the pipe with a
mouth-band on.]*

PEISTHETAERUS.

O stop that puffing ! Heracles, what's this ?
Faith, I've seen many a sight, but never yet 860
A mouth-band-wearing raven ! Now then, priest,
To the new Gods commence the sacrifice.

PRIEST.

I'll do your bidding. Where's the basket-bearer ?
Let us pray
To the Hestia-bird of the household shrine,

And the Kite that watches her feasts divine,
And to all the Olympian birds and birdesses,

PEISTHETAERUS.

O Sunium-hawking, King of the Sea—mew, hail!

PRIEST.

And to the holy Swan, the Pythian and Delian one,
And to thee too, Quail-guide Leto,
And to Artemis the Thistle-finch,

870

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye, Thistle-finch; no more Colaenis now!

PRIEST.

And to Sabazius the Phrygian linnet; and then
To Rhea the Great Mother of Gods and men;

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye, Ostrich-queen, Cleocritus's Mother!

PRIEST.

That they may grant health and salvation
To the whole Cloudcuckooburian nation,
For themselves and the Chians,

PEISTHETAERUS.

I like the Chians everywhere tacked on.

880

PRIEST.

And to the hero-birds and sons of heroes,
And to the Porphyryon rail;
And to the pelican white, and pelican grey;
And to the eagle, and to the capercaillie;

And to the peacock, and to the sedgewarbler;
 And to the teal, and to the skua;
 And to the heron, and to the gannet;
 And to the blackcap, and to the titmouse;—

PEISTHETAERUS.

Stop, stop your calling, hang you. O, look here.
 To what a victim, idiot, are you calling 890
 Ospreys and vultures? Don't you see that one,
 One single kite could carry off the whole?
 Get away hence, you and your garlands too!
 Myself alone will sacrifice this victim.

CHORUS.

ONCE MORE as the laver they're bringing,
 Once more I my hymns must be singing,
 Hymns holy and pious, the Gods to invite—
 One alone, only one,—to our festival rite.
 Your feast for two, I am sure won't do. 900
 For what you are going to offer there
 Is nothing at all but horns and hair.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Let us pray,
 Offering our victim to the feathery gods.
[Just as he is commencing the sacrifice he is inter-
rupted by the entry of a needy Pindaric poet.

POET. *[Singing.]*

Cloudcuckoobury
 With praise and glory crown,
 Singing, O Muse,
 Of the new and happy town!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Whatever's this? Why, who in the world are you?

POET.

O I'm a warbler, carolling sweet lays,
An eager meagre servant of the Muses,
As Homer says.

910

PEISTHETAERUS.

What! you a slave and wear your hair so long?

POET.

No, but all we who teach sweet choral lays
Are eager meagre servants of the Muses,
As Homer says.

PEISTHETAERUS.

That's why your cloke so meagre seems, no doubt.
But, poet, what ill wind has blown you hither?

POET.

O, I've been making, making lovely songs,
Simonideans, virgin songs, and sweet
Dithyrambic songs, on your Cloudcuckooburies.

PEISTHETAERUS.

When did you first begin these lovely songs?

920

POET.

Long, long ago, O yes! Long, long ago!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Why, is not this the City's Tenth-day feast?
I've just this instant given the child its name.

POET.

But fleet, as the merry many-twinkling horses' feet,
The airy fairy Rumour of the Muses.
Aetna's Founder, father mine,
Whose name is the same as the holy altar flame,
Give to me what thy bounty chooses
To give me willingly of thine.

930

PEISTHETAERUS.

He'll cause us trouble now, unless we give him
Something, and so get off. Hallo, you priest,
Why, you've a jerkin and a tunic too;
Strip, give the jerkin to this clever poet.
Take it; upon my word you *do* seem cold.

POET.

This little kindly gift the Muse
Accepts with willing condescension;
But let me to an apt remark
Of Pindar call my lord's attention.

PEISTHETAERUS.

The fellow does not seem inclined to leave us.

940

POET.

Out among the Scythians yonder
See poor Straton wander, wander,
Poor poor Straton, not possessed of a whirly-woven vest.

All inglorious comes, I trow, leather jerkin, if below
 No soft tunic it can show.
 Conceive my drift, I pray.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye, I conceive you want the tunic too.
 Off with it, you. Needs must assist a Poet.
 There, take it, and depart.

POET.

Yes, I'll depart,
 And make to the city pretty songs like this;
 O Thou of the golden throne,
 Sing Her, the quivering, shivering;
 I came to the plains many-sown,
 I came to the snowy, the blowy.
 Alalae!

950

[*Exit.*

PRIEST.

Well, well, but now you surely have escaped
 From all those shiverings, with that nice warm vest.
 This is, by Zeus, a plague I never dreamed of
 That he should find our city out so soon.
 Boy, take the laver and walk round once more.
 Now hush!

[*A second interruption. This time by an ORACLE-
 MONGER.*

ORACLE-MONGER.

Forbear! touch not the goat awhile.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Eh? Who are you?

ORACLE-MONGER.

A soothsayer.

PEISTHETAERUS.

You be hanged! 960

ORACLE-MONGER.

O think not lightly, friend, of things divine;
Know I've an oracle of Bakis, bearing
On your Cloudcuckooburies.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Eh? then why

Did you not soothsay that before I founded
My city here?

ORACLE-MONGER.

The Power within forbade me.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Well, well, there's nought like hearing what it says.

ORACLE-MONGER.

NAY BUT IF ONCE GREY CROWS AND WOLVES SHALL BE
BANDING TOGETHER, ..
OUT IN THE MIDWAY SPACE, 'TWIXT CORINTH AND SICYON,
DWELLING,—

PEISTHETAERUS.

But what in the world have I to do with Corinth?

ORACLE-MONGER.

Bakis is riddling: Bakis means the Air. 970
FIRST TO PANDORA OFFER A WHITE-FLEECE RAM FOR A
VICTIM.

NEXT, WHO FIRST SHALL ARRIVE MY VERSES PROPHETIC
 EXPOUNDING,
 GIVE HIM A BRAND-NEW CLOKE AND A PAIR OF EX-
 CELLENT SANDALS.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Are sandals in it ?

ORACLE-MONGER.

Take the book and see.

GIVE HIM MOREOVER A CUP, AND FILL HIS HANDS WITH
 THE INWARDS.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Are inwards in it ?

ORACLE-MONGER.

Take the book and see.

YOUTH, DIVINELY INSPIRED, IF THOU DOST AS I BID, THOU
 SHALT SURELY
 SOAR IN THE CLOUDS AS AN EAGLE ; REFUSE, AND THOU
 NE'ER SHALT BECOME AN
 EAGLE, OR EVEN A DOVE, OR A WOOD-PÉCKER TAPPING
 THE OAK-TREE.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Is all that in it ?

ORACLE-MONGER.

Take the book and see.

980

PEISTHETAERUS.

O how unlike your oracle to mine,
 Which from Apollo's words I copied out ;

BUT IF A CHEAT, AN IMPOSTOR, PRESUME TO APPEAR
 UNINVITED,
 TROUBLING THE SACRED RITES, AND LUSTING TO TASTE OF
 THE INWARDS,
 HIT HIM BETWIXT THE RIBS WITH ALL YOUR FORCE AND
 YOUR FURY.

ORACLE-MONGER.

You're jesting surely.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Take the book and see.

SEE THAT YE SPARE NOT THE ROGUE, THOUGH HE SOAR
 IN THE CLOUDS AS AN EAGLE,
 YEA, BE HE LAMPON HIMSELF OR EVEN THE GREAT
 DIOPEITHES.

ORACLE-MONGER.

Is all that in it?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Take the book and see.

Get out! be off, confound you! [*Striking him.*]

ORACLE-MONGER.

O! O! O! [*Exit.* 990

PEISTHETAERUS.

There, run away and soothsay somewhere else.

[*A third interruption. This time by METON, the
 celebrated astronomer.*]

METON.

I come amongst you—

PEISTHETAERUS.

Some new misery this!

Come to do what? What's your scheme's form and
outline?

What's your design? What buskin's on your foot?

METON.

I come to land-survey this Air of yours,
And mete it out by acres.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Heaven and Earth!

Whoever are you?

METON. [*Scandalized.*]Whoever am I! I'm METON,
Known throughout Hellas and Colonus.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye,

And what are *these*?

METON.

They're rods for Air-surveying.

I'll just explain. The Air's, in outline, like 1000
One vast extinguisher; so then, observe,
Applying here my flexible rod, and fixing
My compass there,—you understand?

PEISTHETAERUS.

I don't.

METON.

With the straight rod I measure out, that so

The circle may be squared; and in the centre
 A market-place; and streets be leading to it
 Straight to the very centre; just as from
 A star, though circular, straight rays flash out
 In all directions.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Why, the man 's a Thales!

Meton!

METON.

Yes, what?

PEISTHETAERUS.

You know I love you, Meton, 1010
 Take my advice, and slip away unnoticed.

METON.

Why, what 's the matter?

PEISTHETAERUS.

As in Lacedaemon
 There 's stranger-hunting; and a great disturbance;
 And blows in plenty.

METON.

What, a Revolution?

PEISTHETAERUS.

No, no, not that.

METON.

What then?

PEISTHETAERUS.

They've all resolved
With one consent to wallop every quack.

METON.

I'd best be going.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Faith, I'm not quite certain
If you're in time; see, see the blows are coming!
[Striking him.]

METON.

O, murder! help!

PEISTHETAERUS.

I told you how 'twould be.

Come, measure off your steps some other way. 1020

[METON disappears, but a fourth visitor immediately makes his appearance. He is a smart and gorgeous official, one of the Commissioners who were despatched from Athens to superintend, organize, and report upon the affairs of a colony or new acquisition.]

COMMISSIONER.

Ho! consuls, ho!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Sardanapalus, surely!

COMMISSIONER.

Lo, I to your Cloudcuckooburies come,
By lot Commissioner.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Commissioner?

Who sent you hither?

COMMISSIONER.

Lo, a paltry scroll

Of Teleas.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Come now, will you take your pay
And get you gone in peace?

COMMISSIONER.

By Heaven I will.

I ought to be at home on public business,
Some little jobs I've had with Pharnaces.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Then take your pay, and go: your pay's just—this.
[*Striking him.*]

COMMISSIONER.

What's that?

PEISTHETAERUS.

A motion about Pharnaces.

1030

COMMISSIONER.

Witness! he's striking a Commissioner.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Shoo! shoo! begone; you and your verdict-urns.

[*The COMMISSIONER disappears.*]

The shame it is! They send Commissioners
Before we've finished our inaugural rites.

[*The last of these intruders is a seller of Statutes.*]

STATUTE-SELLER. [*Reading.*]

But if the Cloudcuckooburian wrong the Athenian—

PEISTHETAERUS.

Here's some more writing. What new misery's this?

STATUTE-SELLER.

I am a Statute-seller, and I'm come
Bringing new laws to sell you.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Such as what? 1039

STATUTE-SELLER.

*Item, the Cloudcuckooburians are to use the selfsame weights
and measures, and the selfsame coinage as the Olophyxians.*

PEISTHETAERUS.

And you the selfsame as the Oh! Oh! -tyxians.

[*Striking him.*]

STATUTE-SELLER.

Hi! what are you at?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Take off those laws, you rascal.
Laws you won't like I'll give you in a minute.

COMMISSIONER. [*Reappearing.*]

I summon Peisthetaerus for next Munychion on a charge
of outrage.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O that's it, is it? What, are you there still?

STATUTE-SELLER. [*Reappearing.*]

Item, if any man drive away the magistrates, and do not receive them according to the pillar— 1050

PEISTHETAERUS.

O mercy upon us, and are *you* there still?

COMMISSIONER. [*Reappearing.*]

I'll ruin you! I claim ten thousand drachmas!

PEISTHETAERUS.

I'll overturn your verdict-urn, I will.

STATUTE-SELLER. [*Reappearing.*]

Think of that evening when you fouled the pillar.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Ugh! seize him, somebody! Ha, you're off there, are you?
Let's get away from this, and go within,
And there we'll sacrifice the goat in peace.

[*They all go out.*]

CHORUS.

Unto me, the All-controlling,
All-surveying,
Now will men, at every altar,
Prayers be praying;
Me who watch the land, protecting
Fruit and flower,
Slay the myriad-swarming insects
Who the tender buds devour

1060

In the earth and on the branches with a never-satiate
malice,

Nipping off the blossom as it widens from the chalice.

And I slay the noisome creatures

Which consume

And pollute the garden's freshly scented bloom ;
And every little biter, and every creeping thing 1070
Perish in destruction at the onset of my wing.

Listen to the City's notice, specially proclaimed to-day ;
Sirs, Diagoras the Melian whosoever of you slay,
Shall receive, reward, one talent; and another we'll bestow
If you slay some ancient tyrant, dead and buried long ago.
We, the Birds, will give a notice, we proclaim with right
good will,

Sirs, Philocrates, Sparrovian, whosoever of you kill,
Shall receive, reward, one talent, if alive you bring him, four ;
Him who strings and sells the finches, seven an obol, at his
store, 1079

Blows the thrushes out and, rudely, to the public gaze exposes,
Shamefully entreats the blackbirds, thrusting feathers up their
noses.

Pigeons too the rascal catches, keeps and mews them up with
care,

Makes them labour as decoy-birds, tethered underneath a
snare.

Such the notice we would give you. And we wish you
all to know,

Who are keeping birds in cages, you had better let them go.
Else the Birds will surely catch you, and yourselves in
turn employ,

Tied and tethered up securely, other rascals to decoy.

O the happy clan of birds
 Clad in feather;
 Needing not a woollen vest in
 Wintry weather;
 Heeding not the warm far-flashing
 Summer ray,
 For within the leafy bosoms
 Of the flowery meads I stay,
 When the Chirruper in ecstasy is shrilling forth his tune,
 Maddened with the sunshine, and the rapture of the noon.
 And I winter in the cavern's
 Hollow spaces,
 With the happy Oreads playing; and in Spring 1098
 I crop the virgin flowers of the myrtles white and tender,
 Dainties that are fashioned in the gardens of the Graces.

Now we wish to tell the Judges, in a friendly sort of way,
 All the blessings we shall give them if we gain the prize
 to-day.
 Ne'er were made to Alexander lovelier promises or grander.
 First, what every Judge amongst you most of all desires to
 win,
 Little Lauriotic owlets shall be always flocking in.
 Ye shall find them all about you, as the dainty brood in-
 creases,
 Building nests within your purses, hatching little silver
 pieces.
 Then as if in stately Temples shall your happy lives be
 spent,
 For the birds will top your mansions with the Eagle pedi-
 ment. 1110
 If you hold some petty office, if you wish to steal and pick,

In your hands we'll place a falcon, very keen and small
and quick.

If a dinner is in question, crops we'll send you for digestion.
But should you the prize deny us, you had better all pre-
pare,

Like the statues in the open, little copper disks to wear;
Else whene'er abroad ye're walking, clad in raiment white
and new,

Angry birds will wreak their vengeance, spattering over
it and you.

[PEISTHETAERUS *re-enters, having at last completed
the sacrifice.*

PEISTHETAERUS.

Dear Birds, our sacrifice is most auspicious.

But strange it is, no messenger has come

From the great wall we are building, with the news.

Hah! here runs one with true Alpheian pantings. 1121

MESSENGER.

Where, where,—O where, where, where,—O where,
where, where,

Where, where 's our leader Peisthetaerus?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Here.

MESSENGER.

Your building 's built! The Wall's complete!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Well done.

MESSENGER.

And a most grand, magnificent work it is.
So broad, that on its top the Braggadocian
Proxenides could pass Theagenes
Each driving in his chariot, drawn by horses
As bulky as the Trojan.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Heracles!

MESSENGER.

And then its height, I measured that, is just 1130
Six hundred feet.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Poseidon, what a height!
Who built it up to that enormous size?

MESSENGER.

The birds, none other; no Egyptian, bearing
The bricks, no mason, carpenter was there;
Their own hands wrought it, marvellous to see.
From Libya came some thirty thousand cranes
With great foundation stones they had swallowed down;
And these the corn-crakes fashioned with their beaks.
Ten thousand storks were carrying up the bricks;
And lapwings helped, and the other water-birds, 1140
To bring the water up into the air.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Who bare aloft the mortar for them?

MESSENGER.

Hérons

In hods.

PEISTHETAERUS.

But how did they get the mortar in?

MESSENGER.

O, that was most ingeniously contrived.
The geese struck down their feet, and slid them under,
Like shovels, and so heaved it on the hods.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Then is there anything that FEET can't do!

MESSENGER.

And then the ducks, with girdles round their waists,
Carried the bricks: and up the swallows flew,
Like serving-lads, carrying behind them, each 1150
His trowel, and the mortar in their mouths.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Then why should men hire hirelings any more!
Well, well, go on; who was it finished off
The great wall's woodwork?

MESSENGER.

Canny Pelicans,

Excellent workmen, hewing with huge beaks
Gate-timber; and the uproar as they hewed
Was like an arsenal when ships are building.
Now every gateway has its gate, fast-barred,
And watched the whole way round; and birds are pacing

Their beats, and carrying bells, and everywhere 1160
 The guards are stationed, and the beacons blaze
 On every tower. But I must hurry off
 And wash myself. You, manage what remains.

CHORUS.

O man, what ails you? Do you feel surprised
 To hear the building has been built so soon?

PEISTHETAERUS.

By all the Gods I do; and well I may.
 In very truth it seems to me like—lies.
 But see! a guard, a messenger from thence
 Is running towards us with a war-dance look!

GUARD.

Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! 1170

PEISTHETAERUS.

Why, what 's up now?

GUARD.

A terrible thing has happened.
 One of the Gods, of Zeus's Gods, has just,
 Giving our jackdaw sentinels the slip,
 Shot through the gates and flown into the air.

PEISTHETAERUS.

A dreadful deed! A wicked scandalous deed!
 Which of the Gods?

GUARD.

We know not. Wings he had,
 So much we know,

PEISTHETAERUS.

Ye should have sent at once
The civic guard in hot pursuit.

GUARD.

We sent
The mounted archers, thirty thousand falcons,
All with their talons curved, in fighting trim, 1180
Hawk, buzzard, vulture, eagle, eagle-owl.
Yea, Ether vibrates with the whizz and whirr
Of beating pinions, as they seek the God.
Ay, and he's near methinks; he's very near;
He's somewhere here.

PEISTHETAERUS.

A sling, a sling, I say!
Arrows and bows! Fall in, my merry-men all!
Shoot, smite, be resolute. A sling! a sling!

CHORUS.

War is begun, inexpressive war,
War is begun twixt the Gods and me! 1190
Look out, look out, through the cloud-wrapt air
Which erst the Darkness of Erebus bare,
Lest a God slip by, and we fail to see.
Glance eager-eyed on every side,
For close at hand the wingèd sound I hear
Of some Immortal hurtling through the Sky.

*[After all, the intruder who has caused such a
commotion is only poor timorous IRIS, who now
makes her appearance flying across the stage.]*

PEISTHETAERUS.

Hoi! whither away there? whither away? Stop! stop!
 Stop where you are! keep quiet! stay! remain! 1200
 Who, what, whence are you? where do you come from?
 Quick!

IRIS.

Whence do I come? From the Olympian Gods.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Your name! What is it? Sloop or Head-dress?

IRIS.

Iris

The fleet.

PEISTHETAERUS.

The Paralus, or the Salaminian?

IRIS.

Why, what's all this?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Fly up, some buzzard there,
 Fly up, and seize her.

IRIS.

Me! Seize ME, do you say?
 What the plague's this?

PEISTHETAERUS.

You'll find to your cost, directly.

IRIS.

Well now, this passes!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Answer! By what gates
Got you within the city wall, Miss Minx?

IRIS.

I' faith, I know not, fellow, by what gates. 1210

PEISTHETAERUS.

You hear the jade, how she prevaricates!
Saw you the daw-commanders? What, no answer?
Where's your stork-pass?

IRIS.

My patience, what do you mean?

PEISTHETAERUS.

You never got one?

IRIS.

Have you lost your wits?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Did no bird-captain stick a label on you?

IRIS.

On ME? None stuck a label, wretch, on ME.

PEISTHETAERUS.

So then you thought in this sly stealthy way
To fly through Chaos and a realm not yours.

IRIS.

And by what route, then, ought the Gods to fly?

PEISTHETAERUS.

I' faith, I know not. Only not by this. 1220
 This is a trespass ! If you got your rights,
 Of all the Irises that ever were
 You'd be most justly seized and put to death.

IRIS.

But I am deathless.

PEISTHETAERUS.

All the same for that
 You should have died. A pretty thing, forsooth,
 If, whilst all else obey us, you the Gods
 Run riot, and forget that you in turn
 Must learn to yield obedience to your betters.
 But tell me, where do you navigate your wings ?

IRIS.

I ? From the Father to mankind I'm flying, 1230
 To bid them on their bullock-slaughtering hearths
 Slay sheep to the Olympian Gods, and steam
 The streets with savour.

PEISTHETAERUS.

What do you say ? What Gods ?

IRIS.

What Gods ? To us, the Gods in Heaven, of course.

PEISTHETAERUS. [*With supreme contempt.*]

What, are YOU Gods ?

IRIS.

What other Gods exist ?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Birds are now Gods to men ; and men must slay
Victims to them ; and not, by Zeus, to Zeus.

IRIS.

O fool, fool, fool ! Stir not the mighty wrath
Of angry Gods, lest Justice, with the spade
Of vengeful Zeus, demolish all thy race, 1240
And fiery vapour, with Licymnian strokes,
Incinerate thy palace and thyself !

PEISTHETAERUS.

Now listen, girl ; have done with that bombast.
(Don't move.) A Lydian or a Phrygian is it,
You think to terrify with words like those ?
Look here. If Zeus keep troubling me, I'll soon
Incinerate his great Amphion's domes
And halls of state with eagles carrying fire.
And up against him, to high heaven, I'll send
More than six hundred stout Porphyryion rails 1250
All clad in leopard-skins. Yet I remember
When one Porphyryion gave him toil enough.
And as for you, his waiting-maid, if you
Keep troubling me with your outrageous ways,
I'll outrage *you*, and you'll be quite surprised
To find the strength of an old man like me.

IRIS.

O shame upon you, wretch, your words and you.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Now then begone: shoo, shoo ! Eurax patax !

IRIS.

My father won't stand this ; I vow he won't.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Now Zeus-a-mercy, maiden ; fly you off, 1260
Incinerate some younger man than I.

[IRIS *flies back the way she came.* —

CHORUS.

Never again shall the Zeus-born Gods,
Never again shall they pass this way !
Never again through this realm of ours
Shall men send up to the heavenly Powers
The savour of beasts which on earth they slay !

PEISTHETAERUS.

Well, but that herald whom we sent to men,
'Tis strange if he should nevermore return. 1270

[*The HERALD enters.*

HERALD.

O Peisthetaerus, O thou wisest, best,
Thou wisest, deepest, happiest of mankind,
Most glorious, most—O give the word !

PEISTHETAERUS.

What news ?

HERALD.

Accept this golden crown, wherewith all peoples
Crown and revere thee for thy wisdom's sake !

PEISTHETAERUS.

I do. What makes them all revere me so ?

HERALD.

O thou who hast built the etherial glorious city,
Dost thou not know how men revere thy name,
And burn with ardour for this realm of thine?
Why, till ye built this city in the air, 1280
All men had gone Laconian-mad; they went
Long-haired, half-starved, unwashed, Socratified,
With scytales in their hands; but O the change!
They are all bird-mad now, and imitate
The birds, and joy to do whate'er birds do.
Soon as they rise from bed at early dawn,
They settle down on laws, as ye on lawns,
And then they brood upon their leaves and leaflets,
And feed their fill upon a crop of statutes.
So undisguised their madness, that full oft 1290
The names of birds are fastened on to men.
One limping tradesman now is known as "Partridge";
They dub Menippus "Swallow"; and Opuntius
"Blind Raven"; Philocles is "Crested Lark,"
Theagenes is nicknamed "Sheldrake" now;
Lycurgus "Ibis"; Chaerephon the "Vampire";
And Syracosius "Jay"; whilst Meidias there
Is called the "Quail"; aye and he's like a quail
Flipped on the head by some quail-filliper.
So fond they are of birds that all are singing 1300
Songs where a swallow figures in the verse,
Or goose, or may-be widgeon, or ring-dove,
Or wings, or even the scantiest shred of feather.
So much from earth. And let me tell you this;
More than ten thousand men will soon be here,
All wanting wings and taloned modes of life.
Somehow or other you must find them wings.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O then, by Zeus, no time for dallying now ;
 Quick, run you in ; collect the crates and baskets,
 And fill them all with wings ; that done, let Manes 1310
 Bring me them out ; whilst I, remaining here,
 Receive the wingless travellers as they come.

[*The HERALD goes out.*

CHORUS.

Very soon "fully-manned" will this City be called,
 If men in such numbers invade us.

PEISTHETAERUS.

So fortune continue to aid us.

CHORUS.

O, the love of my City the world has enthralled !

PEISTHETAERUS. [*To MANES.*]

Bring quicker the baskets they're packing.

CHORUS.

For in what is it lacking
 That a man for his home can require ?
 Here is Wisdom, and Wit, and each exquisite Grace, 1320
 And here the unruffled, benevolent face
 Of Quiet, and loving Desire.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Why, what a lazy loon are you ! Come, move a little
 faster, do.

CHORUS.

O see that he brings me a basket of wings.
 Rush out in a whirlwind of passion,
 And wallop him, after this fashion.
 For the rogue is as slow as a donkey to go.

PEISTHETAERUS.

No pluck has your Manes, 'tis true.

CHORUS.

But now 'tis for *you*
 The wings in due order to set ;
 Both the musical wings, and the wings of the seers,
 And the wings of the sea, that as each one appears,
 The wings that he wants you can get.

1330

PEISTHETAERUS.

O, by the kestrels, I can't keep my hands
 From banging you, you lazy, crazy oaf.

*[One of the expected visitors is heard approaching,
 singing some verses from the Oenomaus of
 Sophocles.]*

SIRE-STRIKER. *[Singing.]*

O that I might as an eagle be,
 Flying, flying, flying, flying
 Over the surge of the untilled sea!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Not false, methinks, the tale our envoy told us.
 For here comes one whose song is all of eagles.

1340

SIRE-STRIKER.

Fie on it !

There's nothing in this world so sweet as flying ;
I've quite a passion for these same bird-laws.
In fact I'm gone bird-mad, and fly, and long
To dwell with you, and hunger for your laws.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Which of our laws ? for birds have many laws.

SIRE-STRIKER.

All ! All ! but most of all that jolly law
Which lets a youngster throttle and beat his father.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye if a cockerel beat his father here,
We do indeed account him quite a—Man.

1350

SIRE-STRIKER.

That's why I moved up hither and would fain
Throttle my father and get all he has.

PEISTHETAERUS.

But there's an ancient law among the birds,
You'll find it in the tablets of the storks ;
*When the old stork has brought his storklings up,
And all are fully fledged for flight, then they
Must in their turn maintain the stork their father.*

SIRE-STRIKER.

A jolly lot of good I've gained by coming,
If now I've got to feed my father too !

PEISTHETAERUS.

Nay, my poor boy, you came here well-disposed, 1360
 And so I'll rig you like an orphan bird.
 And here 's a new suggestion, not a bad one,
 But what I learnt myself when I was young.
 Don't beat your father, lad; but take this wing,
 And grasp this spur of battle in your hand,
 And think this crest a game-cock's martial comb.
 Now march, keep guard, live on your soldier's pay,
 And let your father be. If you want fighting,
 Fly off to Thraceward regions, and fight there.

SIRE-STRIKER.

By Dionysus, I believe you're right. 1370
 I'll do it too.

PEISTHETAERUS.

You'll show your sense, by Zeus!
[He goes out and CINESIAS the dithyrambic poet comes in. His first line is from Anacreon.]

CINESIAS. *[Singing.]*

On the lightest of wings I am soaring on high,
 Lightly from measure to measure I fly;

PEISTHETAERUS.

Bless me, this creature wants a pack of wings!

CINESIAS. *[Singing.]*

And ever the new I am flitting to find,
 With timorless body, and timorless mind,

PEISTHETAERUS.

We clasp Cinesias, man of linden-wyth.
Why in the world have you whirled your splay foot hither?

CINESIAS. [*Singing.*]

To be a bird, a bird, I long, 1380
A nightingale of thrilling song.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O stop that singing; prithee speak in prose.

CINESIAS.

O give me wings, that I may soar on high,
And pluck poetic fancies from the clouds,
Wild as the whirling winds, and driving snows.

PEISTHETAERUS.

What, do you pluck your fancies from the clouds?

CINESIAS.

Why our whole trade depends upon the clouds;
What are our noblest dithyrambs but things
Of air, and mist, and purple-gleaming depths,
And feathery whirlwings? You shall hear, and judge. 1390

PEISTHETAERUS.

No, no, I won't.

CINESIAS.

By Heracles you shall.
I'll go through all the air, dear friend, for you.

[*Singing.*] Shadowy visions of
Wing-spreading, air-treading,
Taper-necked birds.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Steady, there!

CINESIAS. [*Singing.*]

Bounding along on the path to the seas,
Fain would I float on the stream of the breeze.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O by the Powers, I'll stop your streams and breezes.

CINESIAS. [*Singing.*]

First do I stray on a southerly way ;
Then to the northward my body I bear,
Cutting a harbourless furrow of air.

1400

[PEISTHETAERUS, *while CINESIAS is singing, has been making an elaborate combination of wings with which he now begins to flap the songster.*

A nice trick that, a pleasant trick, old man.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O, you don't like being feathery-whirl-winged, do you?

CINESIAS.

That's how you treat the Cyclian-chorus-trainer
For whose possession all the tribes compete !

PEISTHETAERUS.

Well, will you stop and train a chorus here
For Leotrophides, all flying birds,
Crake-oppidans ?

CINESIAS.

You're jeering me, that's plain.
 But I won't stop, be sure of that, until
 I get me wings, and peragate the air.

[CINESIAS disappears and is immediately succeeded
 by a Common Informer or SYCOPHANT. *His
 first line is adapted from Alcaeus.*

SYCOPHANT. [*Singing.*]

Who be these on varied wing, birds who have not any-
 thing? 1410

O tell me, swallow, tell me, tell me true,
 O long-winged bird, O bird of varied hue!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Come, it's no joke, this plague that's broken out;
 Here comes another, warbling like the rest.

SYCOPHANT. [*Singing.*]

Again I ask thee, tell me, tell me true,
 O long-winged bird, O bird of varied hue!

PEISTHETAERUS.

At his own cloke his catch appears to point;
 More than one swallow *that* requires, I'm thinking.

SYCOPHANT.

Which is the man that wings the visitors?

PEISTHETAERUS.

He stands before you. What do you please to want?

SYCOPHANT.

Wings, wings I want. You need not ask me twice. 1420

PEISTHETAERUS.

Is it Pellene that you're going to fly to?

SYCOPHANT.

No, no : but I'm a sompnour for the Isles,
Informer,—

PEISTHETAERUS.

O the jolly trade you've got !

SYCOPHANT.

And law-suit-hatcher ; so I want the wings
To scare the cities, serving writs all round.

PEISTHETAERUS.

You'll summon them more cleverly, I suppose,
To the tune of wings ?

SYCOPHANT.

No, but to dodge the pirates,
I'll then come flying homeward with the cranes,
First swallowing down a lot of suits for ballast.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Is this your business ? you, a sturdy youngster, 1430
Live by informing on the stranger-folk ?

SYCOPHANT.

What can I do ? I never learnt to dig.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O but, by Zeus, there's many an honest calling
Whence men like you can earn a livelihood,
By means more suitable than hatching suits.

SYCOPHANT.

Come, come, no preaching; wing me, wing me, please.

PEISTHETAERUS.

I wing you now by talking.

SYCOPHANT.

What, by talk

Can you wing men?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Undoubtedly. By talk

All men are winged.

SYCOPHANT.

All!

PEISTHETAERUS:

Have you never heard

The way the fathers in the barbers' shops
Talk to the children, saying things like these,
"*Diitrephes has winged my youngster so*
By specious talk, he's all for chariot-driving."
"*Aye,*" says another, "*and that boy of mine*
Flutters his wings at every Tragic Play."

1440

SYCOPHANT.

So then by talk they are winged;

PEISTHETAERUS.

Exactly so.

Through talk the mind flutters and soars aloft,
And all the man takes wing. And so even now
I wish to turn you, winging you by talk,
To some more honest trade.

SYCOPHANT.

But I DON'T wish. 1450

PEISTHETAERUS.

How then?

SYCOPHANT.

I'll not disgrace my bringing up.
I'll ply the trade my father's fathers plied.
So wing me, please, with light quick-darting wings,
Falcon's or kestrel's, so I'll serve my writs
Abroad on strangers; then accuse them here;
Then dart back there again.

PEISTHETAERUS.

I understand.

So when they come, they'll find the suit decided,
And payment ordered.

SYCOPHANT.

Right! you understand.

PEISTHETAERUS.

And while they're sailing hither you'll fly there,
And seize their goods for payment.

SYCOPHANT.

That's the trick! 1460

Round like a top I'll whizz.

PEISTHETAERUS.

I understand.

A whipping-top; and here by Zeus I've got
Fine Corcyraean wings to set you whizzing.

SYCOPHANT.

O, it's a whip!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Nay, friend, a pair of wings,
To set you spinning round and round to-day.

[Striking him.]

SYCOPHANT.

O! O! O! O!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Come, wing yourself from hence.
Wobble away, you most confounded rascal!
I'll make you spin! I'll law-perverting-trick you!
Now let us gather up the wings and go.

[*They all leave the stage. And the CHORUS commence an account (continued infra 1553 and 1694) of the wonders they have seen while flying about the world. The first stanza is a satire on the bulky and cowardly Cleonymus.*]

CHORUS.

We've been flying, we've been flying

1470

Over sea and land, espying
 Many a wonder strange and new.
 First, a tree of monstrous girth,
 Tall and stout, yet nothing worth,
 For 'tis rotten through and through;
 It has got no heart, and we
 Heard it called "Cleonymus-tree."
 In the spring it blooms gigantic,
 Fig-traducing, sycophantic,
 Yet in falling leaf-time yields
 Nothing but a fall of shields.

1480

Next a spot by darkness skirted,
 Spot, by every light deserted,
 Lone and gloomy, we descried.
 There the human and divine,
 Men with heroes, mix and dine
 Freely, save at even-tide.
 'Tis not safe for mortal men
 To encounter heroes then.
 Then the great Orestes, looming
 Vast and awful through the glooming,
 On their right a stroke delivering,
 Leaves them palsied, stript, and shivering.

[PEISTHETAERUS *returns just as a suspicious-looking stranger (with his face and head muffled up in such voluminous wrappers that no eye can penetrate his disguise and no voice reach his ears with sufficient distinctness to be clearly understood) enters the stage. He is really PROMETHEUS.*

1490

PROMETHEUS.

O dear! O dear! Pray Heaven that Zeus won't see me!
Where's Peisthetaerus?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Why, whatever is here?
What's this enwrapment?

PROMETHEUS.

See you any God
Following behind me there?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Not I, by Zeus.
But who are you?

PROMETHEUS.

And what's the time of day?

PEISTHETAERUS.

The time of day? A little after noon.
[*Shouting.*] BUT WHO ARE YOU?

PROMETHEUS.

Ox-loosing time, or later? 1500

PEISTHETAERUS.

Disgusting idiot!

PROMETHEUS.

What's Zeus doing now?
The clouds collecting or the clouds dispersing?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Out on you, stupid!

PROMETHEUS.

Now then, I'll unwrap.

PEISTHETAERUS.

My dear Prometheus!

PROMETHEUS.

Hush! don't shout like that.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Why, what's up now?

PROMETHEUS.

Don't speak my name so loudly.

'Twould be my ruin, if Zeus see me here.

But now I'll tell you all that's going on

Up in the sky, if you'll just take the umbrella,

And hold it over, that no God may see me.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Ha! Ha!

1510

The crafty thought! Prometheus-like all over.

Get under then; make haste: and speak out freely.

PROMETHEUS.

Then listen.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Speak: I'm listening, never fear.

PROMETHEUS.

All's up with Zeus!

PEISTHETAERUS.

Good gracious me ! since when ?

PROMETHEUS.

Since first you built your city in the air.
 For never from that hour does mortal bring
 Burnt-offerings to the Gods, or savoury steam
 Ascend to heaven from flesh of victims slain.
 So now we fast a Thesmophorian fast,
 No altars burning; and the Barbarous Gods 1520
 Half-starved, and gibbering like Illyrians, vow
 That they'll come marching down on Zeus, unless
 He gets the marts reopened, and the bits
 Of savoury inwards introduced once more.

PEISTHETAERUS.

What, are there really other Gods, Barbarians,
 Up above you ?

PROMETHEUS.

Barbarians? Yes; thence comes
 The ancestral God of Excecestides.

PEISTHETAERUS.

And what's the name of these Barbarian Gods ?

PROMETHEUS.

The name? Triballians.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye, I understand.

'Tis from that quarter Tribulation comes. 1530

PROMETHEUS.

Exactly so. And now I tell you this ;
Envoys will soon be here to treat for peace,
Sent down by Zeus and those Triballians there.
But make no peace, mind that, unless king Zeus
Restores the sceptre to the Birds again,
And gives yourself Miss Sovereignty to wife.

PEISTHETAERUS.

And who 's Miss Sovereignty?

PROMETHEUS.

The loveliest girl.

'Tis she who keeps the thunderbolts of Zeus,
And all his stores,—good counsels, happy laws,
Sound common sense, dockyards, abusive speech, 1540
All his three-obols, and the man who pays them.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Then she keeps EVERYTHING !

PROMETHEUS.

Of course she does.

Win her from Zeus, and *you'll* have EVERYTHING.
I hastened here that I might tell you this,
You know I am always well-disposed to men.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye, but for you we could not fry our fish.

PROMETHEUS.

And I hate every God, you know that, don't you ?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Yes, hatred of the Gods; you always felt it.

PROMETHEUS.

A regular Timon ! but 'tis time to go ;
 Let 's have the umbrella ; then, if Zeus perceives me, 1550
 He'll think I'm following the Basket-bearer.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Here, take the chair, and act the Chair-girl too.

CHORUS.

Next we saw a slight appalling,
 Socrates, unwashed, was calling
 Spirits from the lake below,
 ('Twas on that enchanted ground
 Where the Shadow-feet are found).

There Peisander came to know
 If the spirit cowards lack
 Socrates could conjure back ; 1560
 Then a camel-lamb he slew,
 Like Odysseus, but withdrew,
 Whilst the camel's blood upon
 Pounced the Vampire, Chaerephon.

*[The divine envoys, whose approaching visit had
 been indicated by PROMETHEUS, now make
 their appearance. They are three in number,
 POSEIDON, HERACLES, and the uncivilized
 TRIBALLIAN.]*

POSEIDON.

There, fellow envoys, full in sight, the town
 Whereto we are bound, Cloudcuckoobury, stands !

[*To the TRIBALLIAN.*] You, what are you at, wearing your
 cloke left-sided?

Shift it round rightly; so. My goodness, you're
 A born Laispodias! O Democracy,
 What will you bring us to at last, I wonder, 1570
 If voting Gods elect a clown like this!

TRIBALLIAN.

Hands off there, will yer?

POSEIDON.

Hang you, you're by far
 The uncouthest God I ever came across.
 Now, Heracles, what's to be done?

HERACLES.

You have heard
 What I propose; I'd throttle the man off-hand,
 Whoever he is, that dares blockade the Gods.

POSEIDON.

My dear good fellow, you forget we are sent
 To treat for peace.

HERACLES.

I'd throttle him all the more.

PEISTHETAERUS. [*To Servants.*]

Hand me the grater; bring the silphium, you;
 Now then, the cheese; blow up the fire a little. 1580

POSEIDON.

We three, immortal Gods, with words of greeting
 Salute the Man!

PEISTHETAERUS.

I'm grating silphium now.

HERACLES.

What 's this the flesh of ?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Birds ! Birds tried and sentenced
For rising up against the popular party
Amongst the birds.

HERACLES.

Then you grate silphium, do you,
Over them first.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O welcome, Heracles !
What brings you hither ?

POSEIDON.

We are envoys, sent
Down by the Gods to settle terms of peace.

SERVANT.

There 's no more oil remaining in the flask.

HERACLES.

O dear ! and birds-flesh should be rich and glistening. 1590

POSEIDON.

We Gods gain nothing by the war ; and you,
Think what ye'll get by being friends with us ;
Rain-water in the pools, and halcyon days

Shall be your perquisites the whole year through.
We've ample powers to settle on these terms.

PEISTHETAERUS.

It was not we who ever wished for war,
And now, if even now ye come prepared
With fair proposals, ye will find us ready
To treat for peace. What I call fair is this ;
Let Zeus restore the sceptre to the birds, 1600
And all make friends. If ye accept this offer,
I ask the envoys in to share our banquet.

HERACLES.

I'm altogether satisfied, and vote—

POSEIDON. [*Interrupting.*]

What, wretch ? A fool and glutton, that's what *you* are !
What ! would you rob your father of his kingdom ?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Aye, say you so ? Why, ye'll be mightier far,
Ye Gods above, if Birds bear rule below.
Now men go skulking underneath the clouds,
And swear false oaths, and call the Gods to witness.
But when ye've got the Birds for your allies, 1610
If a man swear by the Raven and by Zeus,
The Raven will come by, and unawares
Fly up, and swoop, and peck the perjurer's eye out.

POSEIDON.

Now by Poseidon there's some sense in that.

HERACLES.

And so say I.

PEISTHETAERUS. [*To TRIBALLIAN.*]

And you?

TRIBALLIAN.

Persuasitree.

PEISTHETAERUS.

You see? he quite assents. And now I'll give you
Another instance of the good ye'll gain.

If a man vow a victim to a God,

And then would shuffle off with cunning words,

Saying, in greedy lust, *The Gods wait long,*

1620

This too we'll make him pay you.

POSEIDON.

Tell me how?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Why, when that man is counting out his money,

Or sitting in his bath, a kite shall pounce

Down unawares, and carry off the price

Of two fat lambs, and bear it to the God.

HERACLES.

I say again, I vote we give the sceptre

Back to the Birds.

POSEIDON.

Ask the Triballian next.

HERACLES.

You there, do you want a drubbing?

TRIBALLIAN.

Hideythine

I'se stickybeatums.

HERACLES.

There ! he 's all for me.

POSEIDON.

Well then, if so you wish it, so we'll have it. 1630

HERACLES. [*To PEISTHETAERUS.*]

Hi ! we accept your terms about the sceptre.

PEISTHETAERUS.

By Zeus, there 's one thing more I've just remembered.
Zeus may retain his Hera, if he will,
But the young girl, Miss Sovereignty, he must
Give me to wife.

POSEIDON.

This looks not like a treaty.
Let us be journeying homewards.

PEISTHETAERUS.

As you will.
Now, cook, be sure you make the gravy rich.

HERACLES.

Why, man alive, Poseidon, where are you off to ?
What, are we going to fight about one woman ?

POSEIDON.

What shall we do ?

HERACLES.

Do? Come to terms at once. 1640

POSEIDON.

You oaf, he's gulling you, and you can't see it.
 Well, it's yourself you are ruining. If Zeus
 Restore the kingdom to the Birds, and die,
 You'll be a pauper. You are the one to get
 Whatever money Zeus may leave behind him.

PEISTHETAERUS.

O! O! the way he's trying to cozen you!
 Hist, step aside, I want to whisper something.
 Your uncle's fooling you, poor dupe. By law
 No shred of all your father's money falls
 To you. Why, you're a bastard, you're not heir. 1650

HERACLES.

Eh! What? A bastard? I?

PEISTHETAERUS.

Of course you are.
 Your mother was an alien. Bless the fool,
 How did you think Athene could be "Heiress,"
 (Being a girl), if she had lawful brethren?

HERACLES.

Well, but suppose my father leaves me all
 As bastard's heritage?

PEISTHETAERUS.

The law won't let him.
 Poseidon here, who now excites you on,

Will be the first to claim the money then,
As lawful brother, and your father's heir.

Why here, I'll read you Solon's law about it. 1660

"A bastard is to have no right of inheritance, if there
be lawful children. And if there be no lawful
children, the goods are to fall to the next of
kin."

HERACLES.

What ! none of all my father's goods to fall
To me ?

PEISTHETAERUS.

No, not one farthing ! tell me this,
Has he enrolled you ever in the guild ?

HERACLES.

He never has. I've often wondered why. 1670

PEISTHETAERUS.

Come, don't look up assault-and-battery-wise.
Join *us*, my boy ; I'll make you autocrat,
And feed you all your days on pigeon's milk.

HERACLES.

I'm quite convinced you're right about the girl ;
I said Restore her ; and I say so now.

PEISTHETAERUS. [*To POSEIDON.*]

And what say you ?

POSEIDON.

I vote the other way.

PEISTHETAERUS.

All rests with this Triballian. What say you?

TRIBALLIAN.

Me gulna charmi grati Sovranau
Birdito stori.

HERACLES.

There ! he said Restore her.

POSEIDON.

O no by Zeus, he never said Restore her ; 1680
He said to migrate as the swallows do.

HERACLES.

O then he said Restore her to the swallows.

POSEIDON.

You two conclude, and settle terms of peace,
Since you both vote it, I will say no more.

HERACLES. [*To PEISTHETAERUS.*]

We're quite prepared to give you all you ask.
So come along, come up to heaven yourself,
And take Miss Sovereignty and all that's there.

PEISTHETAERUS.

So then these birds were slaughtered just in time
To grace our wedding banquet.

HERACLES.

Would you like me
To stay, and roast the meat, while you three go ? 1690

POSEIDON.

To *roast* the meat! To *TASTE* the meat, you mean.
Come along, do.

HERACLES.

I'd have enjoyed it though.

PEISTHETAERUS.

Ho there within ! bring out a wedding robe.

[*They all leave the stage.*]

CHORUS.

In the fields of Litigation,
Near the Water-clock, a nation
 With its tongue its belly fills ;
With its tongue it sows and reaps,
Gathers grapes and figs in heaps,
 With its tongue the soil it tills.

For a Barbarous tribe it passes, 1700
Philips all and Gorgias.

And from this tongue-bellying band
Everywhere on Attic land,
People who a victim slay
Always cut the tongue away.

[A MESSENGER comes from the sky to announce the return of PEISTHETAERUS and MISS SOVEREIGNTY.

MESSENGER.

O all-successful, more than tongue can tell!
O ye, thrice blessed wingèd race of birds,
Welcome your King returning to his halls!

He comes ; no Star has ever gleamed so fair,
 Sparkling refulgent in its gold-rayed home. 1710
 The full far-flashing splendour of the Sun
 Ne'er shone so gloriously as he, who comes
 Bringing a bride too beautiful for words,
 Wielding the wingèd thunderbolt of Zeus.
 Up to Heaven's highest vault, sweet sight, ascends
 Fragrance ineffable; while gentlest airs
 The fume of incense scatter far and wide.
 He comes ; he is here ! Now let the heavenly Muse
 Open her lips with pure auspicious strains.

[The bride and bridegroom enter.]

CHORUS.

Back with you ! out with you ! off with you ! up with
 you ! 1720

Flying around

Welcome the Blessèd with blessedness crowned.

O ! O ! for the youth and the beauty, O !

Well hast thou wed for the town of the Birds.

Great are the blessings, and mighty, and wonderful,

Which through his favour our nation possesses.

Welcome them back, both himself and Miss Sovereignty,

Welcome with nuptial and bridal addresses. 1730

Mid just such a song hymenaeon

Aforetime the Destinies led

The King of the thrones empyréon,

The Ruler of Gods, to the bed

Of Hera his beautiful bride.

Hymen, O Hymenaeus !

And Love, with his pinions of gold,
 Came driving, all blooming and spruce,
 As groomsman and squire to behold
 The wedding of Hera and Zeus,
 Of Zeus and his beautiful bride.
 Hymen, O Hymenaeus !
 Hymen, O Hymenaeus !

1740

PEISTHETAERUS.

I delight in your hymns, I delight in your songs ;
 Your words I admire.

CHORUS.

Now sing of the trophies he brings us from Heaven,
 The earth-crashing thunders, deadly and dire,
 And the lightning's angry flashes of fire,
 And the dread white bolt of the levin.

Blaze of the lightning, so terribly beautiful,
 Golden and grand !

Fire-flashing javelin, glittering ever in
 Zeus's right hand !

Earth-crashing thunder, the hoarsely resounding, the
 Bringer of showers ! 1750

He is your Master, 'tis he that is shaking the
 Earth with your powers !

All that was Zeus's of old
 Now is our hero's alone ;
 Sovereignty, fair to behold,
 Partner of Zeus on his throne,
 Now is for ever his own.
 Hymen, O Hymenaeus !

PEISTHETAERUS.

Now follow on, dear feathered tribes,
To see us wed, to see us wed;
Mount up to Zeus's golden floor,
And nuptial bed, and nuptial bed.
And O, my darling, reach thine hand,
And take my wing and dance with me, 1760
And I will lightly bear thee up,
And carry thee, and carry thee.

CHORUS.

Raise the joyous Paean-cry,
Raise the song of Victory.
Io Paean, alalalae,
Mightiest of the Powers, to thee!

NOTES

P. 4, l. 11. *Even Execestides*; a man so clever in finding a fatherland, that, though a Carian slave (*infra* 764), he managed to find one in Athens itself, and passed himself off as a genuine Athenian citizen.

P. 4, l. 16. *In that same market*. The actor, as in the Comedies of Aristophanes so frequently happens, is speaking in his own person, and not in the character he represents in the drama. The hoopoe, whom the adventurers are seeking, is really another actor, and how then has he become a bird? By means of plumage which, like the jackdaw and the crow themselves, was obtained from the bird-market. Those two birds might not unreasonably be expected to find out the person disguised in feathers which had come from the same stall as themselves.

P. 4, l. 17. *Son of Tharreleides*. This is undoubtedly a skit on some person of diminutive stature; but whether that person was Tharreleides himself, or his son Asopodorus, the old grammarians themselves were unable to determine.

P. 5, l. 29. *To the ravens*. The way to go to the ravens (in the sense of our English expression "to go to the dogs") was far too easily found out by many a young Athenian; whilst these two elderly and highly respectable citizens, however much they may desire to go to the ravens (that is, to the realm of the birds), are quite unable to find out the way.

P. 5, l. 31. *Sacas*. This was Acestor, the tragic poet, who was nicknamed Sacas from the strain of Scythian blood he was supposed to have in his veins; for the Persians, says Hdt., vii, 64, call all the Scythians by this name of Sacas.

P. 13, l. 126. *Scellias' son*. I.e., Aristocrates. He did in fact afterwards become one of the most prominent leaders of the aristocratical party. He took part in the oligarchic Revolution of the 400, was an influential member of that body, but ultimately seceded from it with Theramenes. Finally he was one of the successful generals at Arginusae, and was in that character put to death by the Athenians.

P. 15, l. 146. The Salaminian galley was despatched in the autumn of 415 B.C. (some five or six months before the exhibition of the "Birds") to bring back Alcibiades, just as he was approaching the Sicilian coasts at the head of the great Athenian armament. And the observation of Euelpides was doubtless intended to remind the spectators of that dramatic and most momentous event.

P. 15, l. 151. Melanthius, the obnoxious tragic poet, already assailed in Peace 804, 1009, was said to be afflicted with leprosy. Opuntius was a one-eyed common informer.

P. 22, l. 265. *The lapwing's trick*. The Bird-call has met with no response and Peisthetaerus suggests that just as the plover, to divert attention from her nest, flies to some distant spot, and calls as if to her young, where her young are not; so the Hoopoe has gone into the copse, and whooped for birds where no birds are. This artifice, though most commonly attributed to the lapwing ("Far from her nest the lapwing cries Away"), is not confined to her, but is employed also by others of the Charadriidae, such as the Ringed Plover and the Golden Plover. It is in the absence

of response, and not in its tone, that the Bird-call is said to resemble the cry of the lapwing.

P. 22, l. 268. *Here's a bird.* The twenty-four members of the Chorus do not commence their entrance until line 294 *infra*. But before they come, four birds enter singly, pass before the audience, and disappear on the other side. They are described as the φοινικόπτερος, the Μῆδος, the younger ἔποψ, and the κατωφαγᾶς. The φοινικόπτερος, the φοινικόπτερος Νειλῶος of Heliodorus (vi, 3), the *phoenicopterus ingens* of Juvenal (xi, 139), is the common flamingo, and the Μῆδος, the cock.

P. 24, l. 281. *Grandsire.* We must imagine three generations of hoopoes; (1) the speaker, who considers himself the Tereus of Sophocles, *supra* 101; (2) the Tereus or hoopoe of Philocles. (The Scholiast tells us that Philocles exhibited a tetralogy known as the Πανδιονίς, one of the four plays being the Τηρεὺς or Ἐποψ.) (3) the dilapidated creature now before them. The object of this little fictitious pedigree is to show that the grandfather and grandson both bore the same name, and so to afford an opportunity for a fling at Callias. The intermediate name, the name of the *father*, is for this purpose unimportant.

P. 24, l. 284. *Callias.* The profligate and prodigal Callias was a familiar figure in Athenian literature. In his house Plato laid the scene of his "Protagoras," and Xenophon the scene of his "Symposium." He was one of the accusers of Andocides "in the matter of the Mysteries"; and that orator, in his Defence (130, 131), alleges that when his father Hipponicus (who fell at the battle of Delium 424 B.C.) was at the height of his fame and fortune, there was a nursery legend that the House was haunted by an avenging Curse which would bring it

to absolute ruin. That legend, says Andocides, has come true; that Curse is this dissolute Callias, who has overturned the wealth, the honour, and the substance of his father's house. He dissipated his colossal fortune amongst parasites and women. Both are here mentioned.

P. 25, l. 288. *A Glutton*. This is a fictitious bird, invented to throw ridicule upon Cleonymus. In "The Knights" he is derided as a glutton. In "The Clouds," and ever afterwards, as a coward, cf. *infra* 1475. Here the two charges are combined; his voracity and his cowardice. There is a play in the following lines on the triple meaning of *λόφος*, the *crest* of a bird, the *crest* of a helmet, and the *crest* of a hill.

P. 25, l. 296. *The numbers crowding in*. These are the twenty-four members of the Chorus entering the orchestra. All their names are given in the following lines.

P. 26, l. 300. *Sporgilus* was a barber, and doubtless also a "bird" within the definition of Teleas, *supra*, 169, 170. To bring an owl to Athens where owls were so numerous was proverbial in the sense of our "carrying coals to Newcastle."

P. 31, l. 364. *Eleleleu!* This was the regular war-cry with which Hellenic troops were accustomed to charge the enemy.

P. 32, l. 367. *Clansmen of my mate*. For these were Athenians, and Procne, the hoopoe's wife, was a daughter of Pandion, king of Athens.

P. 33, l. 395. *Cerameicus*. For *there* were buried, at the public cost, all those who had fallen in battle for Athens. All, with one notable exception. The men who fell at Marathon were, for their pre-eminent valour, buried on the battlefield which they had made for ever memorable.

The proceedings in these public funerals are fully recorded by Thucydides (ii, 34), though instead of mentioning Cerameicus by name, he describes it as "the loveliest suburb of Athens."

P. 34, l. 399. *Orneae* was a town in Argolis. It is selected here because its name was similar to that of the birds. But it was doubtless much in the mind of Athenians at this moment, because, less than a year before, a joint expedition of Athenians and Argives had commenced to besiege it. The siege, however, lasted only one day. On the ensuing night the besieging forces bivouacked at some distance from the walls, and the defenders took the opportunity of evacuating the place; which was thereupon destroyed by the Argives.

P. 36, l. 434. *You and you*. Matters having thus taken a pacific turn, the Hoopoe calls two of the theatrical attendants, doubtless those to whom, *infra* 656, the names of Xanthias and Manodorus are given, and directs them to carry back the spit, the platters, and the pot, into the kitchen from which they had originally been taken.

P. 37, l. 446. *And so you shall*. These words are not a mere acceptance of the conditions proposed; which, indeed, are not yet completely formulated. They are intended to predict the ultimate victory of the play.

P. 40, l. 487. *Tiara*. The *κνρβασία*, or *τιάρα*, or *κίδαρις*, otherwise *κίταρις* (for the three words mean the same thing), was the ordinary Persian head-dress. "Their arms are bows and a slight javelin," said Aristagoras to the Spartans, "and they go into battle wearing trousers, and with *κνρβασίας* on their heads." Hdt. v, 49; cf. Id. vii, 61. But the *κνρβασία* of the ordinary Persian was rolled round the head and projected over the forehead, whereas that of the

Great King stood up erect, like the feather in a Highland chieftain's bonnet.

P. 40, l. 493. *The softest of Phrygians*. Euelpides had naturally donned his smartest attire for the Tenth-day feast. Phrygian fleeces were famous not merely for their superior quality, but for the brilliant colouring imparted to them by the dyers of Asia Minor. And the Tenth-day feast, the feast for the naming of the child (see *infra* 922), was a specially festive occasion; as is shown by, amongst other passages, the lines of Eubulus:

“O Ladies, dance the whole night through,
And keep with mirth and joyance due
The Tenth-day of this child of mine.
And I'm prepared, with bounty free,
To give the winner ribbons three,
And apples five, and kisses nine.”

P. 42, l. 507. *Cuckoo! To the plain! Cuckoo!* The tale about the influence which the advent of the cuckoo is supposed to exercise upon the circumcised peoples of Phoenicia and Egypt is merely intended to lead up to this vulgar phrase with which Euelpides immediately caps it. The phrase was no doubt in vogue among the rustics of Attica, not referring to the rite of circumcision at all, but calling on the lusty youths, when the voice of the cuckoo was heard in the land, to give over their pleasures, and be off to their work in the fields.

P. 42, l. 513. *Lysicrates*, the Scholiast tells us, was a dishonest rogue, always open to bribes. His name is introduced here as a surprise.

P. 43, l. 521. *Lampon* was a famous soothsayer of the day. He was one of the leaders of the colonists sent out

by Pericles to establish Thurii as a successor to the destroyed Sybaris.

P. 46, l. 570. *Zan*. This is the Doric form of Ζήν, from which the oblique cases Ζηνός, Ζηνί, Ζήνα are derived. It is found on Cretan coins, and St. Chrysostom (Hom. iii, in Titum. *ad init.*) tells us that on the Cretan tomb of Zeus were the words: "Here lies Zan whom they call Δία."

P. 52, l. 651. *In Aesop's fables*. The story of "the Eagle and the Fox" now stands first in the collection of Aesop's fables. An Eagle and a Fox had sworn firm friendship together, and determined to establish their homes as close as they could to each other. The Eagle built her eyry in a lofty tree; the Fox littered in a brake at its foot. But one day, in the absence of the Fox, the Eagle, wanting food for herself and her nestlings, swooped down upon the Fox's cubs, and bore them up aloft to her eyry, where they furnished a dainty meal for both eagle and eaglets. When the Fox returned, and found that her litter had been devoured, she was in despair, not only for the loss of her cubs, but also for her own inability to avenge their fate; *χερσαία γὰρ οὔσα, πετεινὸν διώκειν ἠδυνάτει*. So she could only stand afar off, and call down curses on her treacherous friend. But such treachery was not allowed to pass unpunished. Soon afterwards the Eagle carried off from an altar some pieces of sacrificial meat to which a burning brand was attached. The brand set fire to the nest; the eaglets tumbled to the ground; and the Fox had the satisfaction of eating them before the very eyes of the Eagle. The moral is that they who deal treacherously with a friend, though the friend may be powerless to requite them, yet cannot escape the righteous judgement of God.

P. 53, l. 667. *Lovely little bird.* Aristophanes appears to have obtained for this Comedy, in addition to the ordinary theatrical musicians, the services of some very remarkable and favourite flute-player who alone could draw from his flute the thrilling notes which might represent the nightingale's song. He enters, wearing a nightingale's head and wings, but otherwise clad in a girl's rich costume, such as would befit the Athenian princess who became the wife of Tereus, though in truth little adapted to "the sober-suited songstress of the grove" as Thomson calls the nightingale.

P. 55, l. 690. *Rivers.* They are not referring to the geological facts which produced the Rivers, as the translation might lead an unwary reader to suppose. They mean the actual pedigree of the Rivers, considered as divine beings, or of River-nymphs. To *this* pedigree Hesiod devotes a section of his Theogony, 337-70.

P. 57, l. 725. *Spring, winter.* Reading ἥρος ἐν ὥραις, χειμῶνι for αὐραῖς, ὥραις, χειμῶνι.

P. 60, l. 787. *At a Tragic Chorus.* The dramatic contests extended over three consecutive days; one Tragic Trilogy being performed in the forenoon, and one Comedy in the afternoon, of each day.

P. 60, l. 798. *Diitrephes*, we learn from the Scholiast, had made his fortune by the manufacture of wicker (or osier) flasks, the handles of which, he tells us, were called wings. He was elected, first, a Phylarch, the tribal commander of the cavalry of his particular tribe. The Phylarchs were of course ten in number. Then he became a Hipparch, one of the two generals commanding the entire Athenian cavalry. See Aristotle's "Polity of Athens," chap. 61. And now he was a great man, and dealt with

high politics, and passed off as a tremendous creature, a very ξουθὸς ἱππαλεκτρῶν, see "Peace," 1177, "Frogs," 932. He did not enjoy his dignity much longer, if historians are right in inferring from the statement of Pausanias ("Attica," xxiii, 2, 3) that he met his death when retreating with his Thracians from the massacre at Mycalessus, for that terrible event occurred less than eighteen months after the production of "The Birds," Thuc. vii, 29, 30. Thucydides, however, though he mentions Diitrephes as the leader of the expedition, makes no allusion to his fate. His statue, riddled with arrows, was seen by Pausanias at the entrance of the Acropolis; and its white marble base was discovered in the last century, bearing the inscription Ἑρμόλυκος Διτρέφους ἀπαρχήν. See Col. Leake's "Topography of Athens," i, 145. He is again mentioned, *infra* 1442, as influencing young men to drive horses, an influence which his position as a high cavalry officer would make it easy for him to exert. Cratinus, in his Χείρωνες, described him as a shameless monster; and the Scholiast here says that he was everywhere characterized as a rapacious and unprincipled busy-body.

P. 62, l. 822. *Theagenes and Aeschines* were two needy braggarts, perpetually boasting of their wealth, which, not being apparent, might (to use a term well-known in our law-courts) be considered to be *in nubibus*, and might therefore perhaps be found in this city of clouds and cuckoos.

P. 64, l. 858. *Play the accompaniment*. Adopting Hermann's conjecture, συναυλείτω δὲ Χαῖρις ὁδᾶ. The Pythian cry is the *Io Paean*.

P. 64, l. 862. *Commence the sacrifice*. There are three distinct stages in this sacrifice: (1) the Priest commences

with the bidding-prayer. It is so long and invites so many birds to the sacrifice, that the puny little victim (probably a mere dummy) will obviously be altogether insufficient. Accordingly (2) Peisthetaerus sends him to the right-about, and proposes to perform his duties himself, *infra* 893. He is, however, so tormented by visitors—the poet, the oracle-monger, and the rest—that he finds it impossible to complete the sacrifice in public; and therefore (3) takes the victim behind the scenes (1057 *infra*) and returns after the second Parabasis, line 1118 (250 lines after the sacrifice was started), to announce that it has at last been completed and that all the omens are favourable.

P. 68, l. 928. *Whose name is the same.* This is a quotation from Pindar, who addressed Hiero as *ζαθέων ἱερῶν ὁμώνυμε* because his name was *Ἱέρων*.

P. 68, l. 941. This speech is almost entirely borrowed from Pindar. Hiero had given to someone, perhaps to Pindar himself, a team of mules, and Pindar is beseeching him to complete the gift by adding a chariot also.

P. 73, l. 998. *Colonus.* Not the village about a mile to the north-west of Athens, famous in legend as the scene of the death of Oedipus; but an eminence in the Athenian Agora, called *Κολωνὸς Ἀγοραῖος*, where Meton had recently erected a horologe worked by water.

P. 76, l. 1028. *Pharnaces* was the satrap of the north-west provinces of Asia Minor, during the earlier period of the Peloponnesian War. He was the father of the more celebrated satrap, Pharnabazus, who played so conspicuous a part in Hellenic affairs during the later years, and after the close, of the War.

P. 77, l. 1046. *For next Munychion.* That is, for the sittings of the law courts next April or May.

P. 79, l. 1072. *Proclaimed to-day*. At the Great Dionysia, several interesting ceremonies took place in the theatre before the dramatic competitions began. One is alluded to *infra* 1361. The Chorus are here referring to another, the proclamation, before an audience representing all friendly Hellenic peoples, of the outlaws upon whose heads a price had been set by the Athenian Demus. The Birds, following this example, proclaim to the same audience that they have set a price on the head of Philocrates, the bird-catcher, of whom we have already heard, *supra* 14.

P. 79, l. 1073. *Diagoras*. It was, Diodorus tells us, during the archonship of Chabrias (the year in which this comedy was exhibited) that Diagoras the Melian, being accused of impiety, fled from Athens, and a resolution was passed setting a price upon his head. The words of the resolution are given by the Scholiast, and are practically identical with the proclamation of the Birds setting a price on the head of Philocrates, *infra* 1077, 8.

P. 79, l. 1075. *Some ancient tyrant*. The Athenians still, in their public Ἀρχαί, denounced the tyrant (see Thesm. 338, 339, and the note on Thesm. 331), and still offered a reward to the tyrannicide. And as "the very name of tyrant" had been "now for fifty years unknown" ("Wasps," 490), Aristophanes chooses to consider the reward as offered to those who should slay a tyrant, dead and buried long ago.

P. 80, l. 1104. *To Alexander*. The gifts offered will be nobler far than those offered to Paris by the three Goddesses, Hera, Athene, and Aphrodite, when they competed for the prize of beauty in the glades of "many-fountained Ida." Paris *we* call the Shepherd-Prince, but in the Iliad,

though the two names are used indiscriminately, he is far more frequently called Alexander.

P. 80, l. 1106. *Lauriotic owlets*. Athenian coins were stamped on the front with the head of Athene, and on the reverse with the figure of an owl and the letters AΘH or AΘE. And as the silver of which they were made came from the mines of Laureium, Aristophanes calls the coins themselves Lauriotic owls.

P. 81, l. 1121. *With true Alpheian pantings*. Panting like a runner in the Olympian races on the banks of the river Alpheius.

P. 82, l. 1137. *They had swallowed*. He is alluding here, as again in lines 1428, 1429, to the popular belief that cranes swallowed pebbles to serve as ballast, and keep them steady in their migrations over the Mediterranean sea.

P. 86, l. 1203. *Sloop or Head-dress*. Owing to her rapid movement through the air, her long robes, probably brilliant with all the colours of the rainbow, float back like a schooner's sails; and with her wings outspread and her hair, with the ribbons and fillets, streaming behind her like pennons from a masthead, she looks like a stately ship sailing onward with all haste, or a gay, bedizened head-dress.

P. 86, l. 1204. *Iris the fleet*. Iris is flying from heaven to earth with a message from Zeus. And her ears are still ringing with the words which have just been resounding through Olympus, the formula with which the Father despatched her on his errands, *off with you, Iris the fleet*, Iliad, viii, 399; xi, 186; xv, 158; xxiv, 144. And so, when she is suddenly summoned to stand and deliver her name, she at once reproduces the name which the Father had used, and calls herself Iris the fleet. Now fleet was a sort of technical name, as applied to a ship. See Pollux, i.

segm. 83, 119. To Peisthetaerus, therefore, the name "Iris the fleet" sounds, or he pretends that it sounds, as an affirmative answer to the question "Is she a sloop?" and he further puzzles the bewildered damsel, by demanding whether she is one of those specially fleet vessels, the *Paralus* or the *Salaminian*.

P. 89, l. 1238. *O fool, fool, fool!* At this audacious pronouncement of Peisthetaerus, Iris starts off in a vein of high Tragedy. Her language is partly borrowed from the ancient Tragedians; partly composed in imitation of their style. Peisthetaerus is mightily tickled with the long Tragic word, "incinerate," and twice retorts it upon Iris, *infra* 1248, 1261. For a thunderbolt Iris substitutes "Licymnian strokes." Licymnus, the half-brother of Alcmena (the mother of Heracles) was killed by Tlepollemus the son of Heracles. The allusion here is to the "Licymnus" of Euripides, in which somebody, or something, was destroyed by lightning.

P. 89, l. 1244. *Don't move.* Iris, for all her brave words, is evidently quaking at the menacing tone and gesture of Peisthetaerus, and is timorously spreading her wings to fly out of his reach, when he thus bids her to keep still. Peisthetaerus can quote Tragedy as well as Iris, and the words *πότερα Λυδὸν ἢ Φρύγα* are taken without alteration from *Alcestis*, 675.

P. 89, l. 1258. *Eurax patax.* An exclamation intended to imitate, and accompany, the clapping of hands.

P. 90, l. 1261. *Incinerate.* He treats her reference to her father as the artifice of a finished coquette, designing to lure him on. He is too old a bird, he intimates, to be caught by that sort of chaff.

P. 91, l. 1292. *Partridge.* Aristophanes takes the op-

portunity of quoting or giving nicknames. (1) The part-ridge was a recognized "trickster" from its habit of diverting attention from its brood by feigning itself lame and wounded. (2) The hollow of a horse's foot was called "swallow," and Menippus derived his nickname from rendering it insensible by cautery. (3) We have heard of the one-eyed Opuntius, *supra* 153. (4) Why Philocles was called "Crested Lark" is uncertain. (5) The Shel-drake makes its nests underground, and its name was given to Theagenes because the vast estates of which he was always boasting (*supra* 822) were like those nests, invisible to the naked eye. (6) Chaerephon was called a "bat" or "vampire" from his cadaverous appearance. (7) Syracosius, a noisy orator, was called a "Jay," which is a very noisy bird. (8) The nickname of Meidias is explained in the text.

P. 95, l. 1361. *Like an orphan bird.* Aristophanes is referring to a very remarkable and imposing ceremony which the audience had been witnessing, in the Theatre itself, at the opening of these very performances. For it was at the Great Dionysia, "when the Tragedies were about to commence," as Aeschines says, "that a herald came forward with a band of youths clad in shining armour, and made a proclamation than which none could be nobler, none a greater incentive to patriotic virtue, saying: These are the orphans of brave men who fell in battle, valiantly fighting in their country's cause. Wherefore the City of Athens has maintained them during their boyhood, and now having armed them in full panoply dismisses them with her blessing to their homes, and invites them to a front seat in the Theatre," Aesch. *adv. Ctes.* 154 (p. 75). Doubtless they would retain their front seat

in the theatre during the dramatic contest, so that these very orphans, accoutred as they were, would be sitting in full view of actors and audience at the very moment when Peisthetaerus was arming in full panoply (to use the words of Aeschines) the youthful Athenian before him.

P. 95, l. 1364. *Wing*. The wing is a shield, the spur a sword, and the cock's comb a soldier's helmet.

P. 96, l. 1378. *Linden-wyth*. An allusion to the extreme thinness of Cinesias.

P. 97, l. 1406. *Leotrophides* was an Athenian of extremely light and bird-like make, often mentioned by the comic poets. *Crake-oppidans*, in the following line, is a play on "Cecropids," a well-known Athenian tribe.

P. 99, l. 1421. *Pellene* was famous for its soft woollen robes. The Sycophant, it is suggested, must be anxious to exchange his torn and tattered cloke for some warmer garment.

P. 102, l. 1463. *Corcyraean wings*. He produces a double-thonged Corcyraean scourge. These Corcyraean scourges, of great size and ivory-handled, were very famous in old times.

P. 103, l. 1482. The second stanza deals with the noted highway-robber Orestes (*supra* 712); and the humour of it consists in speaking of the nightly thief as if he were the hero whose name he bore. The Chorus describe a rendezvous of thieves situate in some region of darkness (really of course in some obscure part of Athens), where in the daytime you might with impunity meet Orestes, or, as they word it, consort with heroes. When it grew dark, however, it would be safer to keep out of his way. There was a superstition that if after nightfall you met the ghost of a departed hero, such as was Orestes,

the son of Agamemnon, you might find your right side smitten with paralysis; and the Chorus observe that if after nightfall you were to meet Orestes the Athenian robber, you might find not only your right side smitten, but your cloke gone as well.

P. 104, l. 1500. *Ox-loosing time*. That is, eventide. Prometheus does not hear a word that Peisthetaerus says, so that the conversation is a series of cross-questions and crooked answers.

P. 108, l. 1551. *The Basket-bearer*. He means the noble Athenian maiden who, for her grace and loveliness, no less than for her rank and virtue, was selected to bear the Sacred Basket in a religious procession. She was followed by a girl carrying her chair, and by another maiden carrying an umbrella to protect her from the sun.

P. 108, l. 1553. The third stanza is a satire on the cowardice of Peisander. Socrates is described as calling up spirits ($\psi\upsilon\chi\alpha\iota$) in the sense of dead men's ghosts. Peisander has lost his spirit ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$) in the sense of courage, and comes to know if Socrates can call it back again. In order to see his lost spirit ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$) again, Peisander has to go through the process through which Odysseus went, in the Eleventh Odyssey, when he summoned up the souls ($\psi\upsilon\chi\alpha\iota$) of the dead, in order to see Teiresias. He goes through the task well enough till the test of his courage begins; but he dared not remain, like Odysseus, to keep the ghosts from the blood till his own $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ came into sight; he turned and fled, leaving the road open to the dried-up, ghost-like Chaerephon (*supra* 1296).

P. 108, l. 1557. *The Shadow-feet* were a mythical Libyan people described by the grammarians as going on all fours, and using their enormous web-feet as umbrellas to protect them from the sun.

P. 108, l. 1561. *A camel-lamb*, i.e. a huge lamb, with an allusion to the size of Peisander himself.

P. 109, l. 1569. *Laispodias* was an Athenian general who, having a stiff or withered leg, wore his cloke awry to conceal the defect.

P. 117, l. 1694. The fourth and last stanza is concerned with a strange tribe of barbarians, who settle down in Phanae (which here means "Informer's land") near the Water-clock (which timed the speeches of the pleaders in the Law Courts) and sow and reap with their tongues. They are connected with the famous sophist Gorgias, and Philip his son or disciple. See "Wasps," 421.

P. 119, l. 1739. *Groomsman*. The groomsman was the bridegroom's "best man," who drove with him to fetch the bride from her home. The bride, on the return drive to her husband's house, sat between the groomsman and the bridegroom.



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